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A LATER PREHISTORIC HOUSE AND ROMANO-BRITISH SMITHING: EXCAVATION OF LAND AT BANCOMBE ROAD, SOMERTON

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SUMMARY

Excavation of land at Bancombe Road, Somerton, by Cotswold Archaeology in 2020 produced evidence of later Iron Age dispersed settlement, superseded during the Roman period by a double ditched track and attached enclosure. A sequence of buildings was established on the north side of this track from the 2nd century AD, lasting until the 4th century. At least one phase of the buildings can be associated with blacksmithing. The deposits within the buildings included associated bone groups involving sheep and burials of neonatal human remains. Importantly, the industrial waste from the smithing process provides robust evidence for the use of coal in metalworking.

INTRODUCTION

Between March and July 2020 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) undertook archaeological excavation on the north-west edge of Somerton, situated immediately south of Bradley Hill Lane (centred on NGR ST 47951 28968) (Fig. 1). The work was funded by Bloor Homes and carried out in advance of development for housing. This project followed geophysical and archaeological evaluation of the site and focused on two areas identified as having the highest potential. This site was adjacent to two further areas being investigated by Wessex Archaeology at Somerton Primary School and Northfield (WA 2020a; 2020b).

BACKGROUND

The site at Bancombe Road is surrounded by numerous archaeological findspots and sites (Fig. 2). Evidence of Iron Age, Bronze Age and Neolithic activity extends away to the west flanking the River Cary including several probable monuments to the west of Somerton Door (HER 55127), and a Neolithic elongated enclosure and Late Iron Age and Romano-British field systems at Roman Farm, Park (Dewar 1949; Randall 2018). Dundon hillfort lies c. 7km to the north, overlooking the River Cary. A promontory fort with later Romano-British activity is situated at Westwood, c. 2km to the west of the Bancombe Road site, overlooking the south side of the River Cary.

The site is only c. 1.2km to the south of the Romano-British and post-Roman site at Bradley Hill, excavated by Leech (1981; Gerrard 2005). Sites at Somerton Primary School and Northfield, both lying to the immediate north of the site on Bradley Hill Lane, included Middle Iron Age and Late Iron Age roundhouses. Later activity comprised Roman settlement enclosures, two substantial masonry barn buildings, three large stone-built corn driers, and 56 graves (WA 2020a; 2020b). The Bancombe Hill villa lies c. 1km to the west, with a surrounding landscape of fields (Riley 1993) and further sites beyond it to the west. Late Iron Age and Romano-British activity also occurred to the south-west (Brace 2019).

Topography and geology

The 4.9ha site comprised two arable fields, bounded to the south by Bancombe Road, and to the north by Bradley Hill Lane (Fig. 3). Located on relatively high ground, generally between 45.5 and 47.4m above Ordnance Datum, between the Rivers Carey and Yeo, the land slopes gently down to the north and east. It has a commanding view of the River Cary valley and the Polden Hills to the north. The underlying bedrock geology is Langport Member, Blue Lias Formation and Charmouth Mudstone (BGS 2021).

Previous work on the site

Geophysical survey indicated rectilinear enclosures, an east-west aligned trackway, a possible ring ditch and potential structural remains (Archaeological Surveys 2019). Archaeological evaluation (CA 2019) confirmed the presence of Late Iron Age and Roman enclosures and the trackway in the north, masonry structural remains in the north-east, and a circular, roundhouse ring in the southern part of the site.

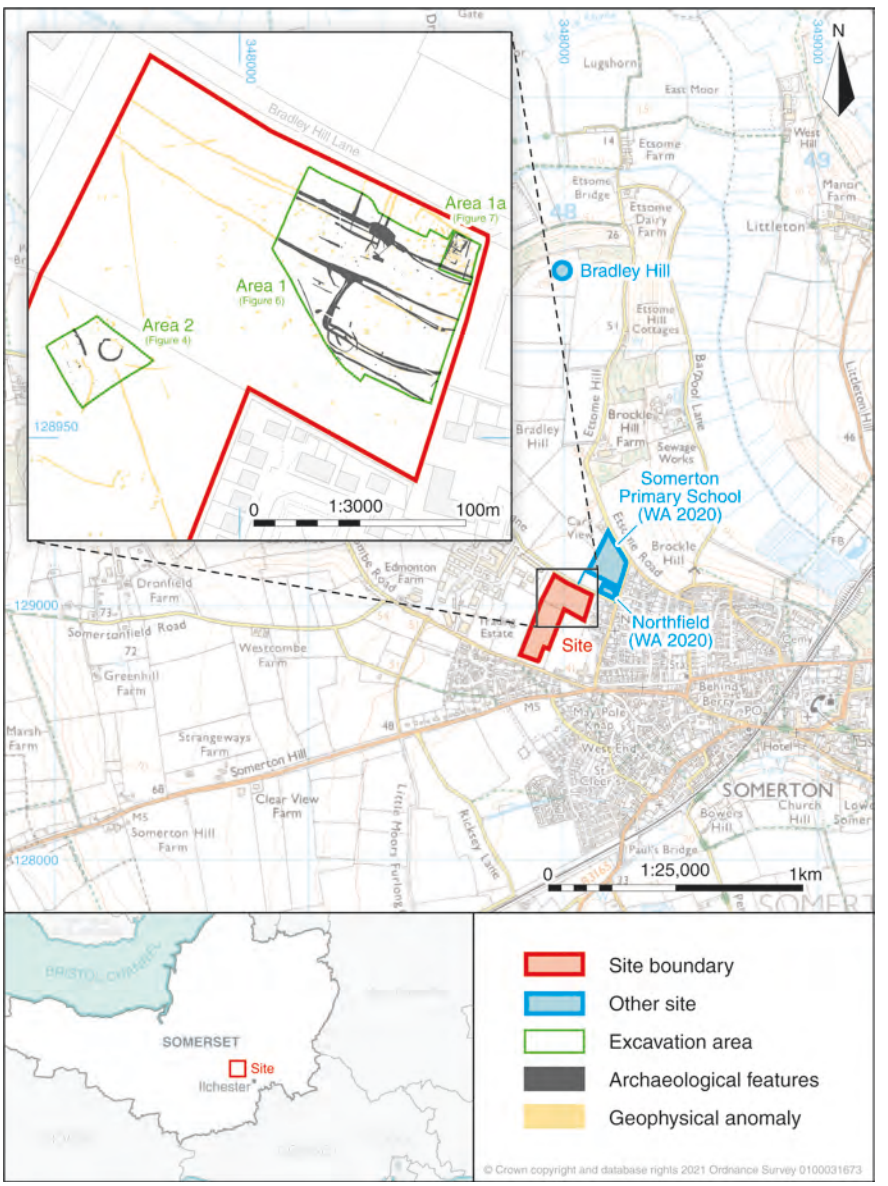

Fig. 1 Site location plan (1:25,000) with location of archaeological features and geophysical anomalies (1:3,000)

METHODOLOGY

Two excavation areas were designated as Areas 1 and 2 (Fig. 1) and subject to machine stripping and hand excavation; the methodology is further explained in an excavation report (CA 2021). The smaller Area 2 (1,166m^2) to the south was targeted upon the ring ditch. Area 1, in the north of the site, comprised the larger area (6,217m^2) and was targeted on the possible trackway and structures identified by the geophysical survey and evaluation. In the north-east, in Area 1a, the masonry structural sequence was dealt with in a more detailed way and including a programme of paleoenvironmental and industrial waste sampling.

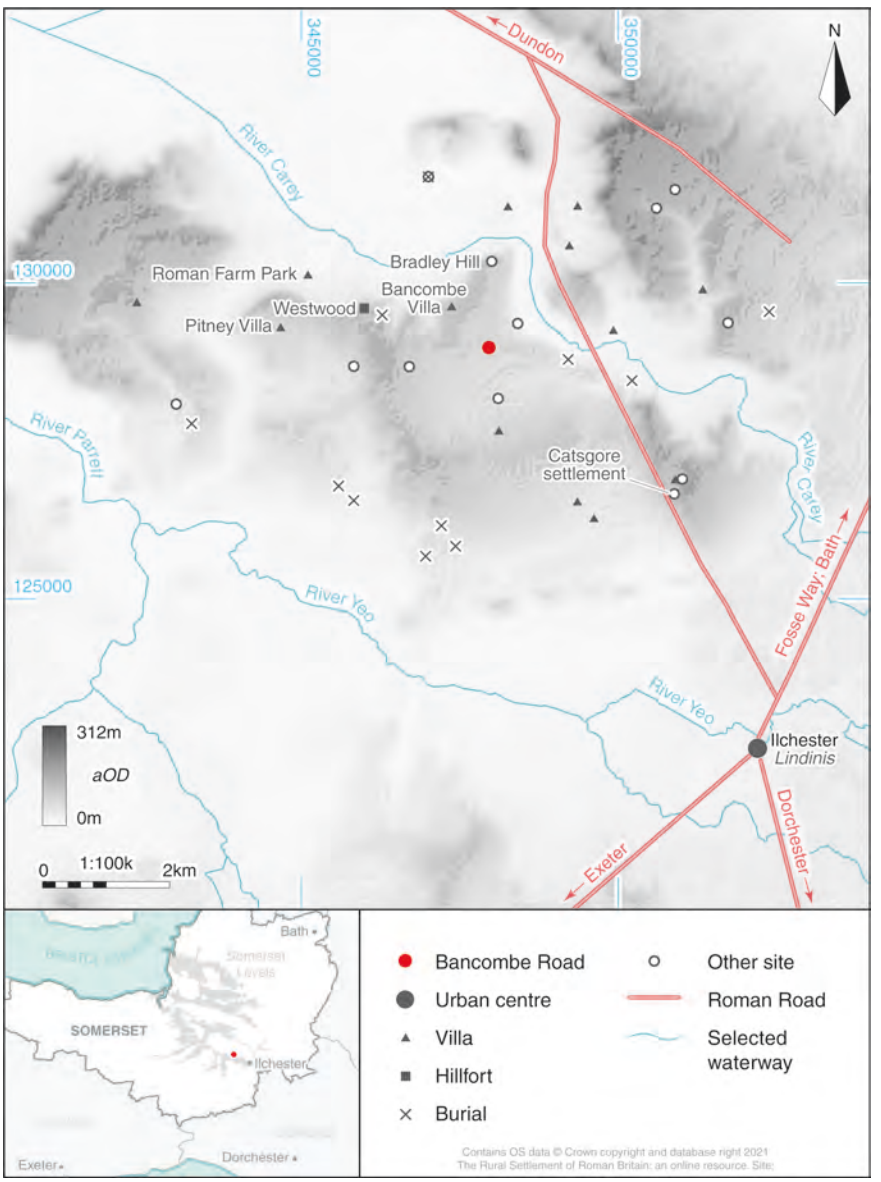

Fig. 2 Roman sites in the area of the Bancombe Road site (1:100,000)

RESULTS

The earliest evidence of activity dated to the Mesolithic to Late Neolithic (Period 1). The most significant periods of occupation occurred in the Late Iron Age/Early Roman (Period 2) and the Romano-British period (Periods 3-4). During the post-medieval to modern era (Period 5) the site was arable land contained within rectilinear field boundary ditches identified in historic mapping.

Fig. 3 Aerial view of the site, looking north-east with the new Somerton Primary School under construction beyond

Period 1 – Mesolithic-Neolithic

A few worked flints possibly dated from the Mesolithic to Early Neolithic periods, and a few sherds of Late Neolithic Grooved Ware were residual in a Period 2 posthole 2329 in Area 2.

Period 2 – Iron Age/Early Romano-British

Several features clearly pre-dated Romano-British period elements. Some of these are likely to date to the later Iron Age, and were assigned to an earlier sub-phase, Period 2i. Period 2ii was a later episode of activity involving three features in the northern part of Area 1 where a date in the Late Iron Age/Early Romano-British transitional period or Early Roman period was suggested.

A sub-circular ring ditch in Area 2, 2386, evidently a roundhouse, had an internal diameter of 9.1m (Fig. 4). It was 0.94-1.46m wide with steep to near-vertical sides and a flat base and 0.1-0.26m deep (Fig. 5). It is possible that there was an entrance on the east side, but it was more truncated in that area. The single sandy silt fill contained a very small assemblage of limestone/fossil shell fabric pottery of the Mid-Late Iron Age and animal bone. To the west of the roundhouse ring ditch was a c. 13m long section of north-west/south-east aligned ditch, 2387. It was c. 1.4m wide with moderate to steep, convex sides and a flat base and was 0.45m deep. The single fill contained only a single piece of worked flint, probably residual. Ditch 2387 was cut at its south-eastern end by pit 2329. This contained a similar fill to the ditch but including a few sherds of redeposited Grooved Ware.

Another potential roundhouse may be represented by a 2.4m length of curvilinear gully 1595 in the south-east of Area 1 (Fig. 6). It was 0.6m wide and 0.18m deep, with a steep, concave profile. The single fill contained a small assemblage of shell-tempered, later prehistoric pottery. Three large postholes in the centre of Area 1 possibly represent further structural remains. The finds included limestone-tempered later prehistoric pottery from two of them, and residual worked flint. A nearby pit was undated but

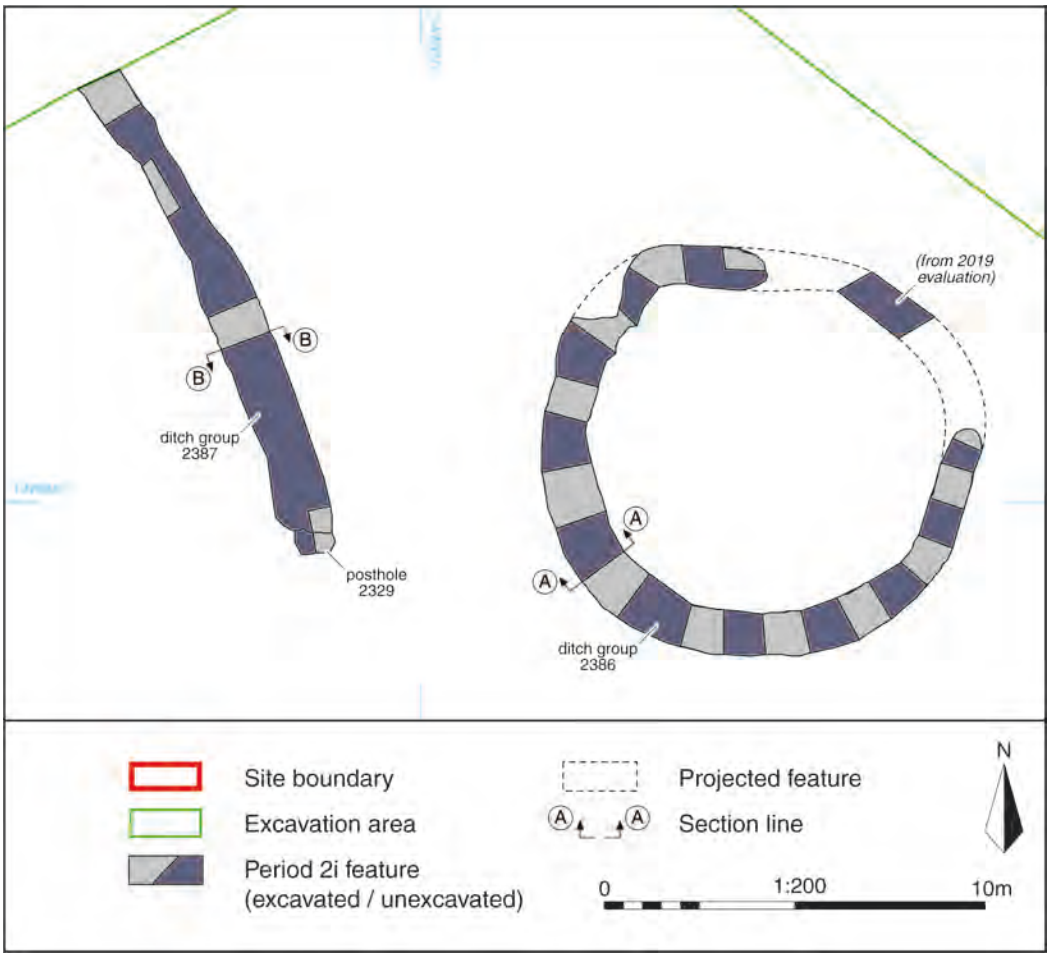

Fig. 4 Plan of archaeological features in Area 2 (1:200)

may represent the remains of a hearth. In addition, located in the southernmost part of Area 1 was part of a small sub-oval enclosure, 1591. Aligned west-north-west/east-south-east it was c. 12m by c. 7m in extent. The ditch was 0.8-0.9m wide and c. 0.3m deep with steep, irregular sides. The single fills contained only a small amount of animal bone and a single sherd of later prehistoric pottery. Truncation by later ditches obscured the full plan and may have removed evidence of an entrance.

In the north of Area 1, sub-rectangular enclosure ditches were recorded aligned north-north-east/south-south-west, extending beyond the excavated areas (Fig. 6). These were re-cut or re-established, but the initial phase probably had Iron Age origins. They were of similar morphology and dimensions. The most westerly ditch, 1102 contained no dateable finds, but was re-established by 1103, and may therefore represent a part of the Iron Age landscape contemporary with the features described above and has been regarded as part of Period 2i. The most easterly ditch of the three, 1121, however had later prehistoric pottery in its lower fills but Romano-British wares in the upper fills, and may therefore have originated within a similar timeframe, describing a parcel of land c. 15m wide; it may have retained its purpose during the subsequent episode of land division. Ditch 1103 re-established the line of the most westerly ditch 1102 during Period 2ii. It contained small amounts of late prehistoric quartz-tempered and Romano-British pottery. To the east, Ditch 1122 also had both late prehistoric and Romano-British pottery. Ditch 1104,

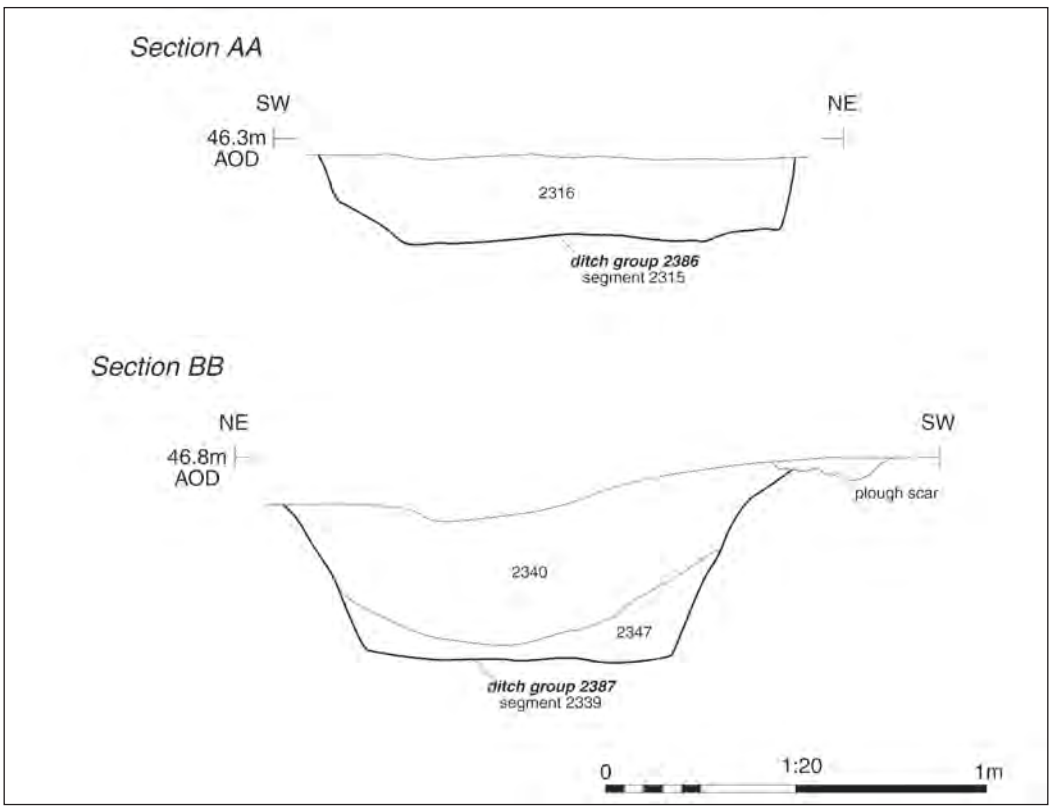

Fig. 5 Sections through Period 2 ring ditch 2386 and ditch 2387 (1:20)

which may have provided the southern boundary of the land parcel, was certainly filling in during the Romano-British period, containing a pair of copper-alloy tweezers (Ra. 26; Fig. 14, no. 8).

Period 3 – Romano-British (2nd-4th centuries AD)

A coherent array of ditches is dated to this period forming a trackway with an associated enclosure. In the north-east, in Area 1a, several structural episodes occurred, and this period is therefore divided into sub-phases Periods 3i-3vi which relate to the building development.

An initial episode of Romano-British activity (Period 3i) included the creation of a large sub-rectangular pit 1590 (Fig. 6). It cut Period 2 ditches 1121 and 1122 but was in turn cut by a sequence of other Roman period features. Pit 1590 was 12m long and 6.8m wide and was more than 1.3m deep, with irregular near-vertical sides. It was cut through the blue lias bedrock and can be interpreted as a quarry. The fills contained a small assemblage of pottery, both residual from Period 2 and of Period 3, a substantial amount of animal bone, and some fired clay and industrial residues. Stone rubble which had slumped into the pit on its north side may represent discarded waste stone. A short distance away to the south and west were two flagstone working floor surfaces (1283 and 1285). The surfaces were sub-rectangular and both aligned north-north-west/south-south-east, being 3.4-4.8m long and 1.78-2.7m wide. Both were made of sub-square or sub-rectangular blue lias tabular slabs. Floor 1285 was clearly later than Period 2ii ditch 1104, and the proximity to the quarry suggests these surfaces were contemporary.

In the north-east corner of the site some features have been assigned to this initial period of activity. These are not closely dated but underlay later structures. They comprise isolated stone surfaces/deposits (1376, 1382 and 1502) (Fig. 7). Layer 1502 was a spread of heat-affected blue lias fragments. The burning of stone may represent reuse from a structure associated with a high temperature industry or lime

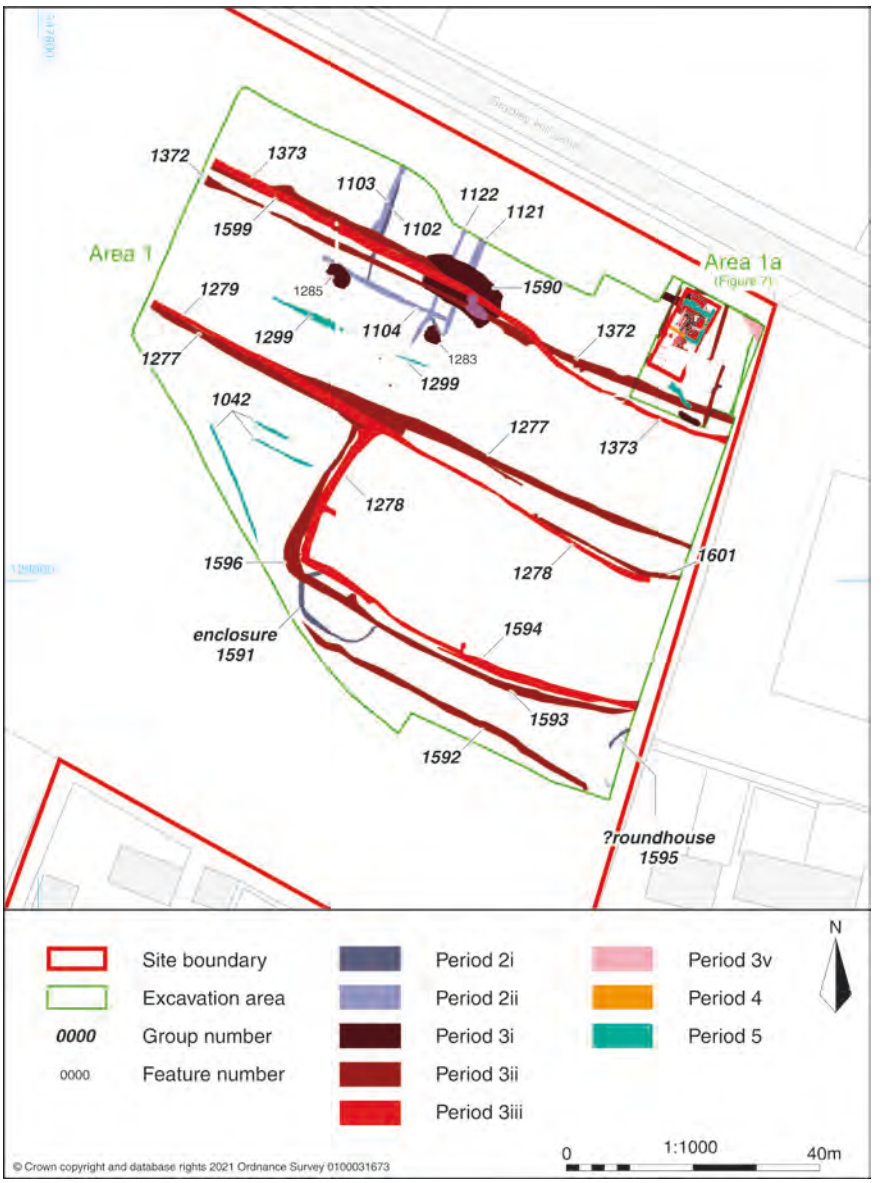

Fig. 6 Phased plan Area 1/1a (1:1,000)

mortar production for nearby building construction. It is possible that these were accompanied by an earlier structure, possibly represented by cut 1552 in the north-east corner of the excavated area, which was rectilinear with a T-shaped return, and which may be a robbed-out wall cut. The backfill contained blue lias rubble fragments as well as two smithing hearth cakes, animal bone (including a pair of chicken legs), and Late Iron Age and Romano-British pottery as well as industrial residues probably derived from the overlying Period 3iv deposit 1514.

A significant organising element throughout Period 3 was the west-north-west to east-south-east aligned trackway (Fig. 6). This had been located during geophysical survey and continued for at least 90m to the west of the excavated area. Initially, in

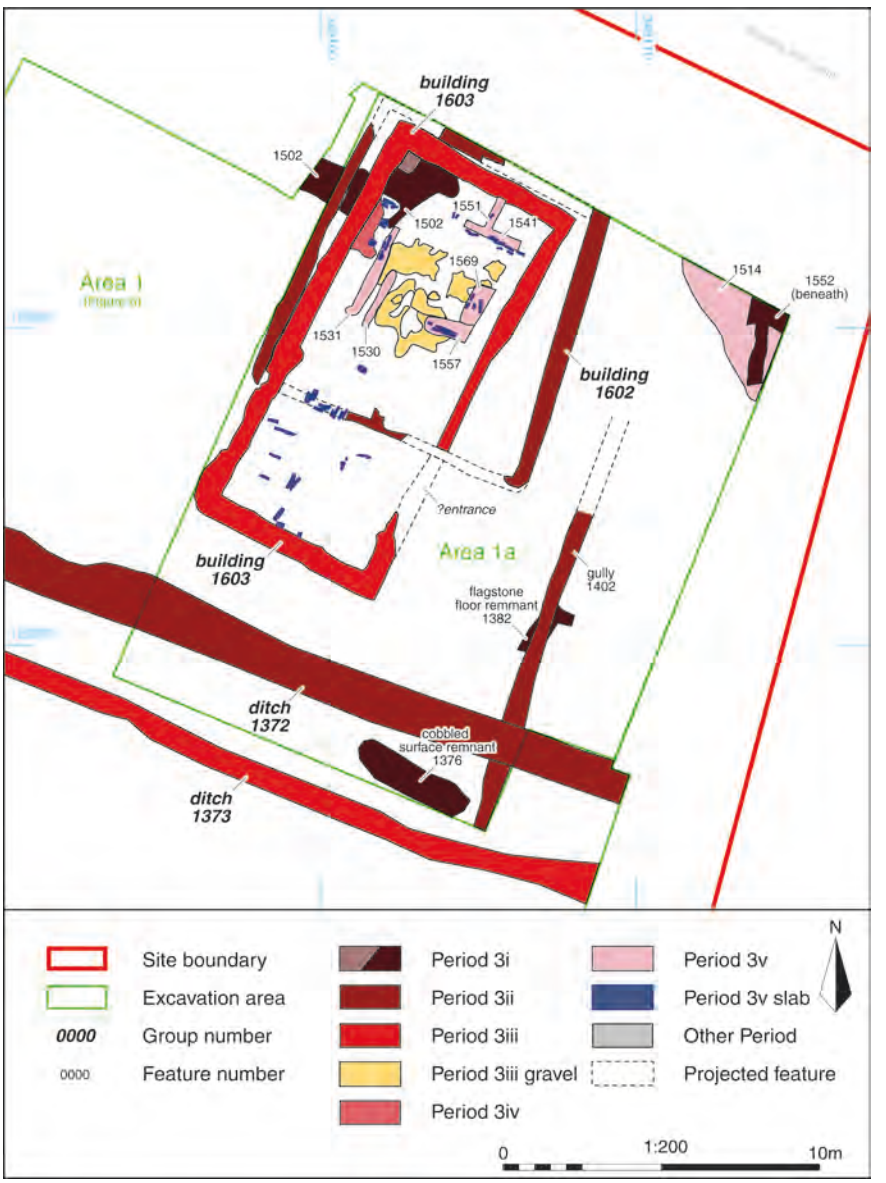

Fig. 7 Period 3 phased plan of structures Area 1a (1:200)

Period 3ii, ditches 1372 and 1277 formed a c. 19m wide track. A sub-rectangular enclosure (ditches 1593/1596) c. 29m wide and at least 58m long was appended to the southern side. These earliest ditches had similar morphology, with moderate to steep concave but slightly irregular sides, and dimensions, being generally 0.8-1.2m wide and 0.4-0.7m deep with a flat base, following the natural cleavage planes in the rock. None displayed asymmetrical fills or bank collapse deposits, and they only produced a small assemblage of finds. There were a number of other ditched features (e.g. 1592, 1601) which are similarly oriented and belong stratigraphically with the initial construction of the trackway, but whose function is unclear.

Later (probably equivalent to Periods 3iii-v of the

Fig. 8 Aerial orthophotograph of the Area 1a buildings

buildings), there was a c. 6m shift southwards at the east end (ditches 1279/1278 on the south side and 1599/1373 to the north). This produced a pronounced curving of the ditches on both sides of the track, apparently to deliberately avoid the structure(s) in the north-east part of the site. The enclosure on the southern side of the trackway was also re-established with a second sequence of ditches (1278/1601 and 1594/1600).

From Period 3ii onwards a complex sequence of Roman structures was constructed. There were three major masonry structural phases – Buildings 1602 (Period 3ii), 1603 (Periods 3iii-v), and 1604 (Period 3vi) (Figs 7, 8 and 10). This stratigraphic and structural sequence survived as a series of deposits and masonry which was only a maximum of c. 0.2m thick. It was heavily truncated and in places had been mixed by later Roman or post-Roman demolition/ robbing of earlier structural components and post-medieval ploughing. The masonry walls only survived as one or two courses. It is difficult to ascertain the duration of each episode given the mixing of deposits and the general lack of closely dateable cultural material which can be closely associated with any one structure.

The earliest building, 1602, was roughly trapezoidal, on a north-north-east/south-south-west alignment (Fig. 7). It was at least 7.5m long (extending to the north beyond the excavated area) and 7.5m (internal dimensions) wide at its north extent and 8.5m at the south end. The masonry only survived to 0.1m height, so, due to truncation and lack of the full plan, no doorway was identified. The walls ranged from 0.4-0.6m in width, by far the best-preserved segment being the east wall where two courses of masonry survived. Lias slabs were laid

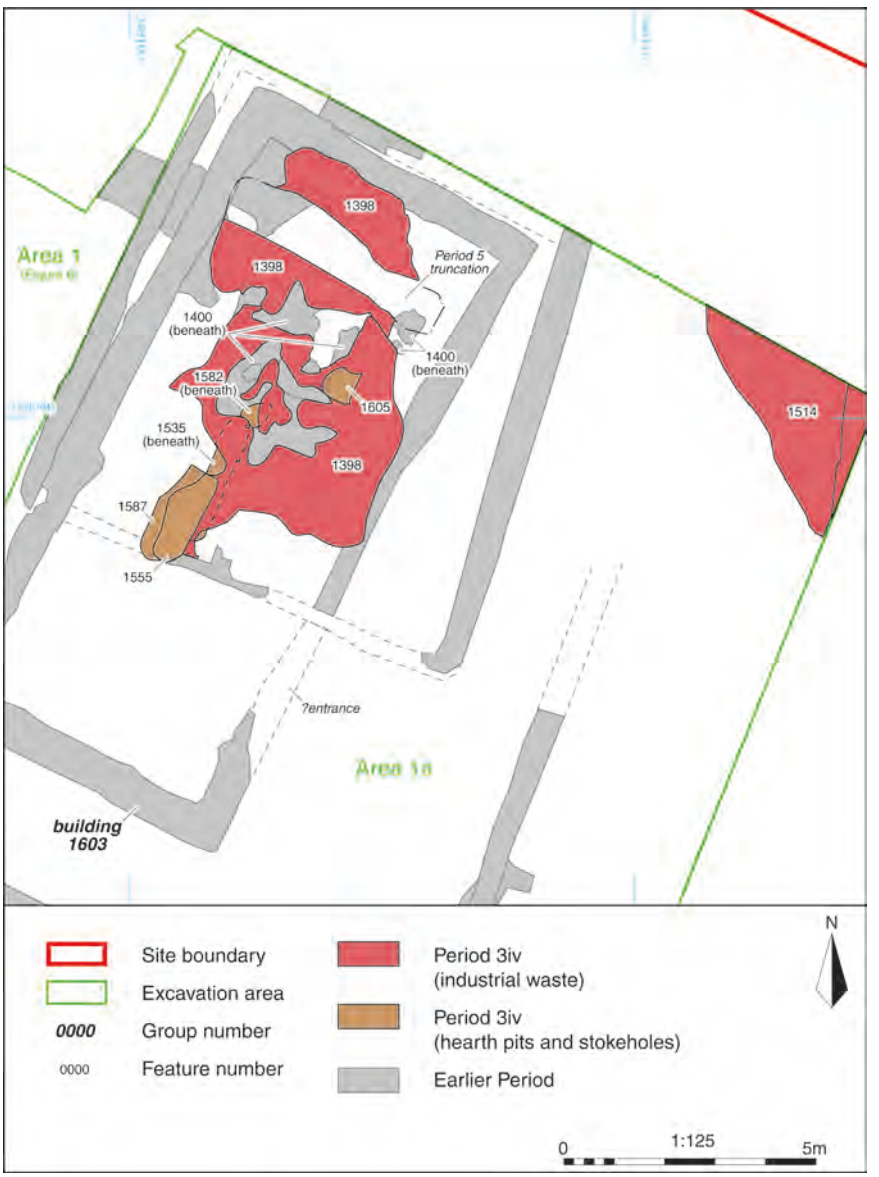

Fig. 9 Metalworking related features and deposits, Area 1a (1:125)

directly on a disturbed soil layer. The basal tabular course was flat with an overlying 'levelling course' of smaller tabular blocks laid at approximately 30-45 degrees to the horizontal with no mortar. Almost parallel to, and c. 1.8m to the east of Building 1602, was gully 1402. This was very truncated; it was only 0.65m wide and 70mm deep but may have provided a drainage channel into the northern trackway ditch for water running off the roof.

The second structural phase (commencing in Period 3iii) comprised Building 1603 (Fig. 7). This was the most significant of the structural developments. It followed the alignment of the earlier Building 1602 but was rectangular, being significantly longer at 12.4m but only 5m wide. It also appears to have shifted to the south, with the southern

end of Building 1603 extending c. 5m further south than its predecessor. It was perhaps this southerly extension which influenced the change in layout of the associated trackway ditches described above. A significant part (c. 5.5m) of the east wall of the structure was absent, possibly due to the insertion of a wall in Period 3vi or robbing/demolition in Period 4. Alternatively, there may have been an entrance in the east wall.

The west wall of Building 1603, with two masonry courses, was the best preserved. The walls were 0.7m wide and survived to a maximum height of 0.2m. The basal course construction was very similar to the earlier Building 1602. The herringbone construction varied between walls, leaning in different directions. The impression is of rather piecemeal construction, although this may have only affected the foundation courses. The second course of masonry blocks present in the west wall comprised roughly dressed blue lias blocks with dressed facets on the internal and external surfaces.

Within Building 1603 were remnants of a compact, rammed pea gravel floor deposit, 1400, up to 20mm thick (Fig. 9). This discontinuous deposit extended over a 4.4m by 4.2m area in the north half of the building. Similar patchy, gravel-rich deposits which may represent a remnant floor also occurred in the southern end of the building. Floor 1400 had been heat-affected *in situ* with pink or reddish patches and contained common charcoal. It had been heavily truncated by construction of Period 3v internal partitions. On the north-east edge, a small pit, 1605 was recorded. Its stratigraphic relationship to floor 1400 was unclear, although it was sealed by industrial residue spread 1398 (see below). This sub-circular pit was c. 0.65 diameter and 60mm deep with moderate concave sides and a flat base and can be identified as a hearth. The fill contained abundant charcoal as well as having had a distinctive orange/red hue, suggesting a high iron content. This was later identified as hammerscale and is most likely derived from the overlying deposit 1398. Most of the charcoal was unidentifiable but included oak and hawthorn (*Quercus* and *Crataegus*), with wood derived from timbers.

A sequence of four north/south aligned stoke holes (Fig. 9) (1535, 1h555, 1582, and 1587) were positioned south of the main area of pea gravel floor (1400). The stoke holes were between c. 0.93-2.30m long, 0.3-0.6m wide and c. 0.15m deep with moderate to steep, concave sides and clearly discernible reddish or orange/red *in situ* heat-affected margins. No direct relationship was seen between any of them and pit 1605. The latest stoke hole, 1535, contained charcoal of ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), much of which was roundwood.

Overlying floor 1400, hearth-pit 1605, and the stoke holes, was an extensive deposit 1398 (Fig. 9). It comprised a patchy but generally penannular spread, 8.4m by 4.8m and up to 0.12m thick, located within the walls of the northern part of Building 1603. It comprised dark greyish brown/black clayey silt with very common charcoal. It may have originated around hearth-pit 1605, but this was not clear. The spread had clearly been heavily truncated and moved around. It had ambiguous relationships with later demolition deposits and in places had been spread over walls and the foundation cuts of later stone partitions. It is probable that the movement was caused by medieval or post-medieval ploughing. It contained a significant amount of 2nd-4th century AD Romano-British pottery, a number of registered artefacts of the same date span, three late 3rd-earlier 4th century AD coins, industrial waste, and a neonatal tibia. The distribution, stratigraphic relationships and dates of artefacts within the industrial residue spread indicates that it reached its eventual position later in the sequence of use of the buildings, no earlier than the 4th century. Given the truncation and potential mixing and movement, it cannot be clearly ascertained at what point the deposit began its formation.

In addition to the deposits within the building, a dump of industrial waste (1514) was partially exposed in the north-east corner of the excavated area (Fig. 9). Deposit 1514 was 0.17m thick and comprised a dark greyish-brown/black silty clay with occasional blue lias fragments, charcoal inclusions and very common iron slag (5.45kg), including smithing hearth cakes. Other finds included 3rd-4th-century AD pottery, a 1st-2nd-century AD copper-alloy brooch fragment (Fig. 13, no. 3), iron nails and hobnails, two stone tally or gaming discs, and a small assemblage of animal bone and coal fragments.

Period 3v represents a change in function and layout of the interior of Building 1603. This was mainly indicated by the insertion of a series of blue lias slabs arrayed around the interior. These were set on edge to create apparent partitions (Fig. 7), either parallel to (c. 1-2m distant), or perpendicular from, the exterior walls. These were best preserved in the south-west, north-west and north-east corners of the building. The partitioned spaces or 'bays' were generally between 1-2m long and 0.8-1m wide.

The final structural phase, Period 3vi, comprised the insertion of L-shaped wall 1401/1520 within the northern extent of Building 1603 (Fig. 10), and the demolition or collapse of the north-east part of Building 1603. This created Building 1604 within the southern part of its predecessor. Wall 1401/1520 comprised the best-preserved masonry seen on the

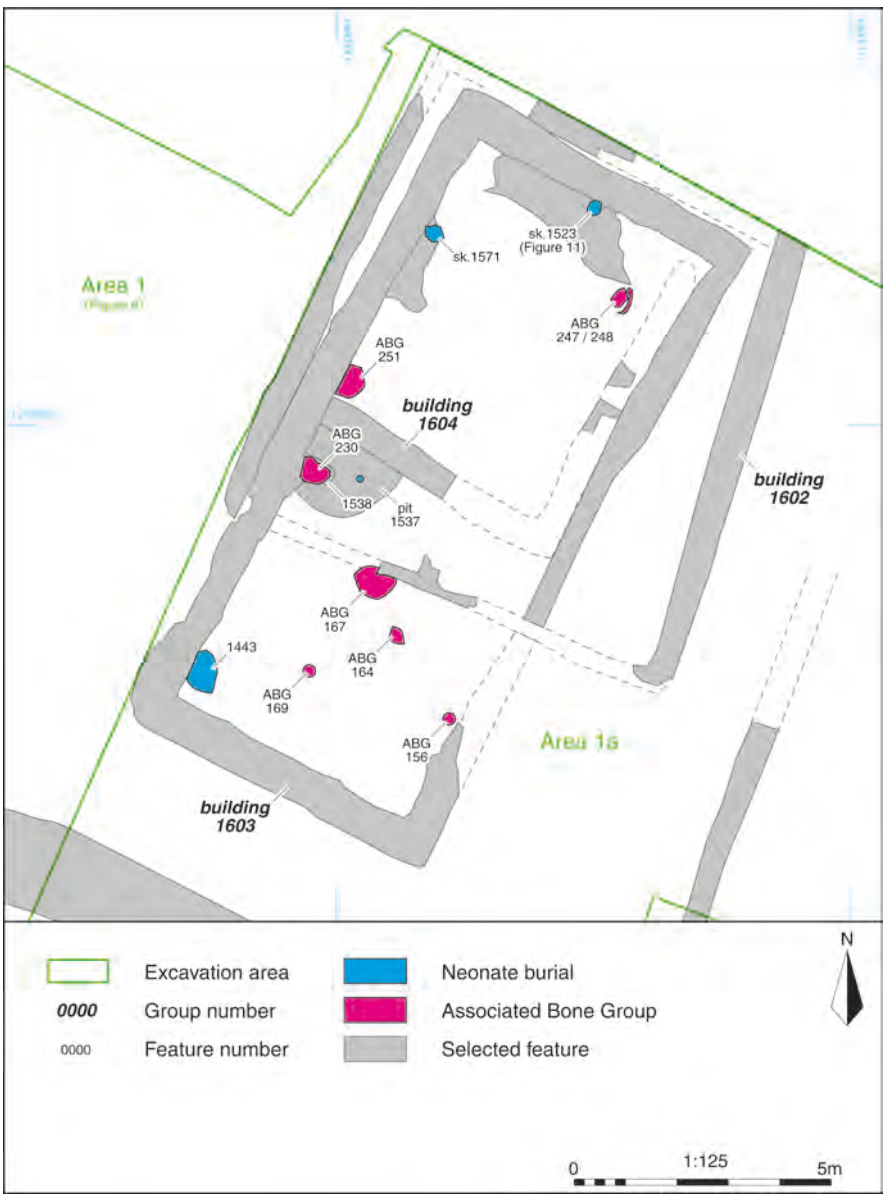

Fig. 10 Associated bone groups and human neonate burials and deposits, Area 1a buildings (1:125)

site. The western extent abutted the inner face of the west wall of Building 1603, and survived as a 2.80m long, 0.6m wide and 0.18m high foundation. The foundation trench cut the Periods 3iii-iv stoke holes and Period 3v partition foundation cuts. Wall 1401/1520 was also the only masonry to still have bonding material *in situ*, namely lime mortar, characterised by a yellowish-white coarse silt with very common, very small crushed blue lias fragments. The construction technique was unique on the site, exploiting a mix of herringbone coursing as well as rough ashlar blocks as seen in Building 1603. Similar

Fig. 11 Neonate burial SK 1523

walls, much better preserved, have been recorded on the adjacent Northfield site (WA 2020b). There were few features associated with this building phase. Pit 1537 assigned to Period 3vi or 4, south of wall 1401 and close to the east side of wall 1390, was 1.35m by 1.35m and 0.16m deep and contained a single fill which included neonatal remains. It was cut by 1538, which contained sheep/goat ABG Ra. 230.

Period 4 (4th century AD)

This period saw the disuse and destruction of the buildings. The trackway ditches, and probably the associated enclosure, also fell into disuse. Because of the truncated and disturbed nature of the deposits, it is difficult to ascertain when this began, but the finds indicate a possibly mid-late 4th-century AD date.

Several stone rubble/demolition deposits were located inside and outside the building and were the most artefact-rich on the site. This comprised mainly 2nd-4th century AD pottery, a sizable proportion of which was of the mid-late 3rd to 4th century AD. A small number of copper-alloy objects included two fragments of a twisted wire bracelet (Fig. 13, nos 5 and 6), and two coins of the late 3rd century and 4th century AD. Iron objects, nails, hobnails and shoe cleats, were recovered, as well as worked stone objects, animal bone and small quantities of fired/burnt clay, industrial waste and coal. None of this material is incompatible with the deposit being formed by the mid-4th century AD. A fragment of possible roof tile of blue lias suggests that Building 1603 had been at least partly roofed in stone. To the south, the demolition deposits overlay and partially infilled the northern trackway ditch. It included mid-3rd to 4th-century AD pottery, industrial waste and a curved ceramic tile fragment.

Seven Associated Bone Groups (ABGs) of animal bone and several burials of perinatal human remains were recorded within the footprint of Periods 3iii-v Building 1603 (Fig. 10), although some are possibly related to Period 3ii Building 1602 and Period 3vi Building 1604. Almost all had no discernible burial cuts, which complicates their attribution. This is probably due to the degree of post-medieval disturbance combined with the short timeframe for each specific burial. Neonate burial SK 1523 (Fig. 11) was dug into a Period 3i deposit but was most likely later. ABGs Ra. 156, 169, Ra. 251 and ABG Ra. 168 (which was also associated with neonatal

remains) were within demolition deposits and seem to have occurred when the lower part of the walls of Building 1603 at least were extant, between Periods 3iii-v into Period 4.

ABGs Ra. 164 and Ra. 167, also within demolition deposits, were both truncated by slab-on-edge partitions and therefore must pre-date Period 3v. ABG Ra. 247/248 had an unclear relationship with these partitions, so cannot be clearly phased, whilst neonatal burial SK 1571 also had unclear relationships but was at least later than 3iii. ABG Ra. 230 was in a small pit (1538) located near the west wall of Building 1603, beneath rubble displaced from the wall, and cutting pit 1537 which contained neonatal human remains. These may belong to the end of Period 3 or the beginning of Period 4. A small number of neonate bones occurred in the subsoil which overlay the Period 4 demolition layers. These may represent additional disturbed neonate burials.

Period 5

Following the demolition or collapse of the Roman buildings there was very little activity. A few ditches correlate with field boundaries known from historical mapping (ASE 2018), and there was a small assemblage of post-medieval pottery, tile and glass. The heavy disturbance of earlier features by ploughing probably relates to medieval and post-medieval use of the land.

THE FINDS

A range of finds and palaeoenvironmental material, including prehistoric and Roman pottery, lithics, metal, worked stone and worked bone objects, industrial waste and coal, human remains, animal bone, charcoal and charred plant remains were recovered. Full reports on these can be found elsewhere (CA 2021) and are summarised here.

The pottery

Jacky Sommerville

The pottery assemblage totals 4,004 sherds (34,468.2g). This included early and late prehistoric, Roman, medieval and post-medieval material. A full report including discussion of the fabrics (CA 2021) is provided elsewhere and summarised here. A summary table of fabrics is reproduced here (Table 1).

TABLE 1 SUMMARY OF POTTERY BY FABRIC

Period	Fabric code (NFRC Code in bold*)	Description	Count	Weight (g)	EVEs value
Early prehistoric	GRW	Grooved ware	3	20	0.03
Subtotal			***3***	***20***	***0.03***
Late prehistoric	CAL	Calcite-tempered	2	2	
	FOS	Fossil shell-tempered	90	512	0.24
	LS	Limestone-tempered	11	180	0.01
	LSCA	Limestone-and-calcite tempered	6	34	0.05
	LSF	Fine limestone tempered	2	4	0.05
	LSFO	Fossiliferous limestone-tempered	113	725	0.30
	LSGF	Limestone, grog and flint tempered	3	28	
	LSS	Limestone-and-shell tempered	11	39	
	QZ	Quartz-tempered	35	242.7	0.11
	QZLS	Quartz-and-limestone tempered	2	7	
	QZR	Quartz-and-rock tempered	2	5	
	ROC	Rock-tempered	1	2	
	ROQ	Rock-and-quartz tempered	6	74	0.01
	SWDSS	Southwest Decorated ware (sandstone-tempered)	1	27	
	VES	Vesicular	1	9	
Subtotal			***286***	***1,890.7***	***0.77***

Roman (including	BS	Black-firing sand-tempered	81	493	0.39
LIA/Early Roman):	CC1	Colour-coated ware (orange fabric, black slip)	2	30	0.04
local	CC2	Colour coated ware (buff fabric, black slip)	2	5	0.03
	GTQZ	Grog-and-quartz tempered	3	74	
	GW1	Greyware (medium sandy)	59	553	0.92
	GW2	Greyware (fine with common black grits and mica)	115	932	1.07
	GW3	Greyware (medium with common black grits and occasional quartz)	102	921	2.72
	GW4	Greyware (medium with sparse rounded quartz)	22	137	0.07
	GW5	Greyware (sandy with black grits)	1	8	
	GW6	Greyware (with sparse black grits and mica)	54	574	0.93
	GW7	Greyware (fine with black surfaces)	7	37	
	GW8	Greyware (micaceous with black surfaces)	5	65	0.06
	OX1	Oxidised (fine)	42	313.9	0.30
	OX2	Oxidised (sandy)	81	579	0.08
	OX3	Oxidised (fine, micaceous)	12	30	0.09
	OX4	Oxidised (micaceous with black grits)	61	468	0.43
	OX5	Oxidised (with ironstones)	1	20	
	OX6	Oxidised (sandy with organic voids)	1	3	
	STGR	Storage jar (grog-tempered)	11	283	
	STLS	Storage jar (limestone-tempered)	4	597	0.28
	STQR	Storage jar (quartz-and-rock tempered)	42	790	
	STQZ	Storage jar (quartz-tempered)	6	120	
	STRC	Storage jar (rock-tempered)	109	1,657	0.05
	WH1	Whiteware (fine)	6	20	0.03
Regional	**DOR BB1**	Southeast Dorset Black-burnished ware	2,612	21,630	23.75
	LNV CC	Lower Nene Valley colour-coated ware	2	3	
	NFO CC	New Forest Colour-coated ware	15	98	0.27
	NFO PA	New Forest Parchment ware	1	10	
	NFO RS	New Forest Red-slipped ware	4	38	0.04
	OXF PA	Oxford Parchment ware	1	3	0.02
	OXF RS	Oxford Red-slipped ware	38	289	0.47
	OXF WH	Oxford Whiteware	3	13	
	OXF WS	Oxford White-slipped ware	1	2	
	SOD RE	South Devon reduced (micaceous) ware	1	2	0.03
	SOW BB1	Southwest Dorset Black-burnished ware	4	47	
	SVW OX1	Severn Valley (oxidised) ware	7	46	0.05
	SVW RED	Severn Valley (reduced) ware	3	14	
Continental	**CNG BS**	Central Gaulish black-slipped ware	1	5	**0.13**
	EG SAM	East Gaulish samian	3	18	
	LEZ SA2	Central Gaulish samian (Lezoux)	22	172	**0.13**
Subtotal			***3547***	***31,099.9***	***32.38***

Medieval	CHE	Chert-tempered	5	25	
	JUG	Oxidised, glazed, fine sandy jug fabric	2	3.6	
	SCW	Oxidised sandy coarseware	4	22	
	SCWG	Glazed sandy coarseware	1	39	0.07
Subtotal			***12***	***89.6***	***0.07***
Post-medieval/	BRG	Brown-glazed earthenware	2	11	
modern	CRM	Creamware	5	8	
	GRE	Glazed earthenware	91	1,134	
	MOT	Mottled brown-glazed earthenware	2	7	
	PEA	Pearlware	2	20	
	POR	Porcelain	3	4	
	RBR	Refined brown-glazed earthenware	1	20	
	REF	Refined whiteware	11	34	
	SSOM	South Somerset glazed earthenware	8	20	
	TGE	Tin-glazed earthenware	3	6	
	TPP	Transfer-printed pearlware	7	28	
	TPR	Transfer-printed refined whiteware	20	73	
	YEL	Yellow ware	1	3	
Subtotal			***156***	***1,368***	***0.00***
Grand total			**4,004**	**34,468.2**	**33.25**

Three joining rim sherds from a Late Neolithic Grooved Ware vessel were recovered from the fill of late prehistoric posthole 2329 in Area 2 (Fig. 12, no. 1). The fabric contains inclusions of argillaceous rock fragments, which may represent natural components of the clay, rather than added temper. The form appears to be a typical barrel-shaped jar, featuring a pointed bevelled rim. The rim is decorated with an incised motif. It is possible that the motif immediately below the rim consists of hanging pendants. The incised decorative motif is relatively common in the Durrington Walls style of Grooved Ware (Longworth 1971, 108, fig. 47). If the suggested affinity of this vessel is with the Durrington Walls style, this vessel is likely to belong to the later part of the Grooved Ware sequence (c. 2700-2400 BC). Grooved Ware is relatively uncommon in this part of Somerset (Tabor 2017, 27).

Illustrated

1. Posthole 2329, Grooved Ware barrel-shaped jar with slightly bevelled rim, fabric GRW.

Later prehistoric pottery totals 286 sherds (1,890.7g). It is well broken-up and most was redeposited. A relatively wide range of fabrics was recorded but those tempered with limestone, fossil shell, quartz or rock were most common (Table 1). Most rim sherds are too fragmentary to assign a form, but those which are classifiable are all jars. Diagnostic examples all came from Period 3 contexts but include a bead rim in fabric QZ from the southern trackway ditch; a short, everted rim in the same fabric from the attached enclosure ditch; an upright, rounded rim from deposit 1398 within Building 1603; a slack shouldered jar with a rounded rim in fabric LSFO associated with SK 1523 within Building 1603; and a globular jar with a simple upright rim in the same fabric from pea gravel floor 1400 in the same building (Fig. 12, no. 2). The other rim sherds are from vessels with bead, upright rounded or flattened rims (e.g. Fig. 12, no. 3 from Period 3i stone layer 1502 in fabric LSFO). The sherd of sandstone-tempered pottery is most likely to represent South Western Decorated ware (Peacock's Group 2; 1969, 46-47). This is a base/body sherd redeposited in the possibly robbed out Period 3i structure 1552. It features two parallel incised grooves just above the base and concentric grooves on the underside of the base.

Illustrated

2. Roman stone layer 1502, globular vessel with upright, rounded rim, fabric LSFO.
3. Roman stone layer 1502, vessel with upright, flattened rim, fabric LSFO.

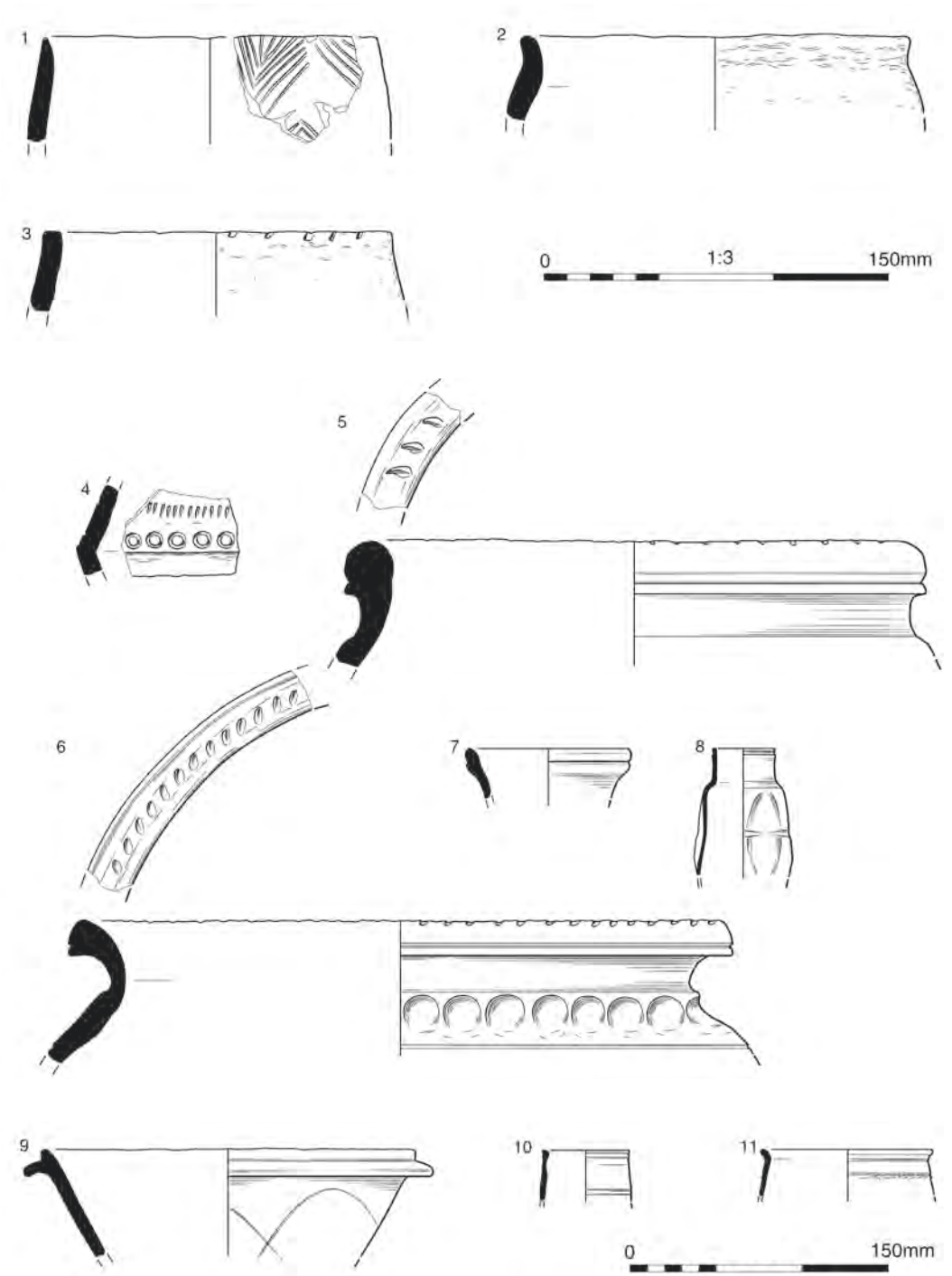

Fig. 12 Iron Age and Roman pottery – details in catalogue

Shell-tempered pottery featured in the Middle to Late Iron Age assemblages and quartz-tempered fabrics in the Late Iron Age material from Bradley Hill (Leech 1981, 235) and from Cadbury Castle (Woodward and Bevan 2000, 27), which is c. 16km to the east of the site. The globular vessel (Fig. 12, no. 2) is comparable to jar form JC2 from Cadbury Castle (Woodward 2000, 332) and the example with the upright flattened rim (Fig. 12, no. 3) compares to jar form JB2 (*ibid*., 329). Pottery tempered with fossil shell and/or limestone dominated the Middle to Late Iron Age assemblage from Royal Naval Air Yeovilton (Seager Smith 2006, 26-27), c. 10km to the south-east. The Late Iron Age South Western Decorated ware sherd features decoration typical of Group 2 vessels (Peacock 1969, 46) as seen at sites including Glastonbury Lake Village (Bulleid 1917), Meare Village East (Rouillard 1987) and Riverton Road, Somerton (Sommerville 2020).

Roman pottery (including Late Iron Age/Early Roman transitional material) totals 3,547 sherds (31,099.9g). It was a moderately well broken-up assemblage and a substantial amount was recovered from topsoil, subsoil and clearance layers. Just over a third was recovered from demolition deposits. The remainder was derived mostly from ditch fills. The Roman assemblage is dominated by Black Burnished ware from south-eastern Dorset (fabric DOR BB1; 74% by sherd count and 70% by weight; Table 1). Reduced and oxidised coarsewares are also relatively common, comprising eight greyware fabrics (365 sherds, 3,228g) and six oxidised fabrics (198 sherds, 1,413.9g). Most of these are likely to have been manufactured relatively locally. Many assemblages from the area are dominated by greyware types. Greyware fabrics GW2 or GW3 may compare to sherds which are to be subjected to thin section analysis for Wessex Archaeology (A. Thorp pers. comm.) to ascertain whether or not they derive from the Congresbury kilns in north Somerset. This currently remains a potential source for a proportion of the Bancombe Road greywares. Several coarse fabrics, which total 172 sherds (5%)/3,447g (11%), present as large storage jars, tempered with grog, limestone, quartz-and-rock, quartz or rock. A number of other regional imports are represented in addition to DOR BB1 (Table 1), but mostly by only a few sherds of each. Oxford red-slipped ware is the most common of these, with 38 sherds (289g). Continental imports make up only 0.8% of the assemblage by sherd count and 0.6% by weight. The majority of this is represented by central Gaulish samian. There are also three sherds of East Gaulish samian and one of Central Gaulish Black-slipped ware (Fig. 12, no. 11) (Table 1).

TABLE 2 ROMAN VESSEL FORMS

Type	**Minimum no. of vessels**	**% of vessels**	**EVEs**
beaker	10	2	0.66
tankard	1	0.2	0.05
flagon	7	1.4	0.81
jar	268	53.7	18.07
bowl	88	17.6	5.76
dish	117	23.5	5.62
mortarium	7	1.4	-
lid	1	0.2	0.17
Total	**499**	**100**	**31.14**

Jars predominate, at 53.7% (a minimum of 268 vessels) of identifiable forms (Table 2). The vast majority have everted rims. Among the Southeast Dorset Black Burnished ware, around a quarter can be classified as Seager Smith and Davies Types 1, 2 or 3 (Seager Smith and Davies 1993, 230-31). A small number of jars in greyware or oxidised fabrics imitate these Dorset BB1 forms. Although handmade storage jar fabrics make up 5% of fabric types by sherd count, only three storage jars are represented by rim sherds. Two of these feature bifid rims with thumbnail impression on the rim top and one also has a thumbed cordon at the base of the neck (Fig. 12, nos 5, 6). Similar vessels are common in assemblages in south-west England (Timby 1989, 54) including those from the temple at Lamyatt Beacon (Leech 1986, 289-90) and Ilchester (Leach 1982, 158). Dishes are also relatively common, at 23.5% (117). Dishes in Southeast Dorset Black Burnished ware are mostly Seager Smith and Davies Type 20 plain rim, or Type 22 flat rim types. Again, a small number of equivalent, derived forms are present in greyware or oxidised fabrics.

Seven mortaria are represented by base sherds. A smaller number of bowls is present. Most common are Type 25 conical flanged forms in fabric DOR BB1 (Fig. 12, no. 9). The remainder mostly have bead rims or are hemispherical flanged types, in imitation of the samian form Drag. 38. A carinated bowl, represented by a body sherd, has been decorated with a row of impressed circles immediately above the carination and a row of incised vertical lines above that (Fig. 12, no. 4). A Young Type C49 shallow bowl with an out-turned rim and a Type C51 flanged bowl were present (Young 1977, 158-61). Other tablewares include nine beakers, one tankard and eight flagons. The beakers are mostly indented (Fig. 12, no. 8), but also include an example with a cornice rim (Fig. 12, no. 10) and

one with barbotine dot decoration (Fig. 12, no. 11). The tankard is a straight-sided type. Flagons were present in greyware and oxidised fabrics. Most have bifid rims (Fig. 12, no. 7), but the oxidised example is a ring-necked type.

Illustrated

4. Period 4 demolition layer 1506, decorated body sherd from a carinated vessel, fabric BS.
5. Surface finds deposit 1362, (sub-surface clearance layer 1005), storage jar, fabric STRC.
6. Layer 1408, subdivision of Period 4 demolition layer 1379, storage jar, fabric STLS.
7. Surface finds deposit 1309, (sub-surface clearance layer 1005), flagon with bifid (double bead) rim, fabric GW2.
8. Layer 1393, subdivision of Period 4 demolition layer 1377, indented beaker, fabric GW6.
9. Layer 1393, subdivision of Period 4 demolition layer 1377, conical flanged dish, fabric DOR BB1.
10. Layer 1413, subdivision of Period 4 demolition layer 1378, beaker with cornice rim, fabric CC2.
11. Period 3iii surface 1553 (similar to 1400), beaker, fabric CNG BS.

Only a small proportion of the pottery is identifiable as Early Roman (1st to 2nd century AD) in date. This includes some of the samian, the Type 1, Type 8 jars and Type 22 Southeast Dorset BB1, the ring-necked flagon and the straight-sided tankard. The majority of this Early Roman pottery is residual, but some also occurred in Period 2ii enclosure ditch 1121 which also contained later prehistoric pottery.

Most of the activity on site appears to be later Roman in date, as evidenced by the numbers of Type 3 jars with everted rims and, in particular, Type 25 conical flanged bowls in fabric DOR BB1, and several other fabrics. None of the Oxford Red-slipped ware can be dated more narrowly than to the mid-3rd to late 4th century. Much of the Late Roman material was recovered from Period 4 demolition layers, but also occurred in Period 3iv industrial residue spread 1398. The late forms in fabric DOR BB1 and the regional fineware/mortaria types from Bancombe Road provide broad indications for dating after c. AD 270 and is consistent with a mid-4th-century AD date for cessation of activity on the site.

Discussion

The Roman pottery assemblage compares in its composition with that recovered from Bradley Hill, immediately to the north of the site at Bancombe Road, where the pottery and coins suggested occupation focused mainly from the later 4th century (Besly 1981; Leech 1982, 239). Pottery recovered from Buildings 1-3 and adjacent areas at that site (totalling c. 3,470 sherds) was 76.3% Southeast Dorset Black Burnished ware by sherd count, 7.6% greyware and also included products from the Oxfordshire and New Forest potteries in addition to a small amount of samian (Leech 1982, 238-39). Pottery dating to the 2nd century AD at Bradley Hill was reported to be absent (details of samian fabrics were not published) and although storage jar fabric was present there it was tempered with quartz and grog (*ibid.*). The abundance of Southeast Dorset Black Burnished ware is a notable feature of both sites, possibly due to their proximity to Ilchester (c. 8km south-east of Somerton) which has been suggested as a local distribution centre (Lovell 2006, 35).

At RNAS Yeovilton, c. 9km to the south-west, the Roman pottery assemblage totalled 5,196 sherds (74,387g) and is also comparable to that from Bancombe Road, but more broadly. Here Southeast Dorset Black Burnished ware made up c. 55% of the assemblage by sherd count and there was a higher proportion of greywares. The latter included south-western greyware fabrics, the most common of which features distinctive silvery inclusions (Lovell 2006, 31-35) and was not identified at Bancombe Road. The Yeovilton assemblage also includes some Oxford Red-slipped ware, New Forest colour-coated ware, a few mortaria, and a little samian and Central Gaulish Black-slipped ware – all of which were present in small amounts at Bancombe Road – together with a few sherds of amphorae fabrics, which were not. The assemblage from Yeovilton also suggests activity mostly during the later Roman period (*ibid.*, 28-30, 36). Later excavations at the site produced a smaller assemblage (559 sherds, 5,742g) with a similar composition including 54% Southeast Dorset Black Burnished ware by sherd count, several greywares including 'southwestern' greywares and small amounts of New Forest Colour-coated ware, Oxford Red-slipped ware and samian (Brook 2019, table 1).

The small medieval assemblage totals twelve sherds (89.6g). It was largely unstratified. Four fabrics are represented: chert-tempered, oxidised sandy coarseware, glazed sandy coarse ware, and fine sandy, oxidised, glazed jug fabric (Table 1). All are body sherds except for a rim sherd from a jug or pitcher with an attached, slashed strap handle from the area of the Roman buildings. The medieval pottery dates to the 12th to 15th centuries. A total of 156 sherds (1,368g) all presented as unfeatured body sherds; they were generally unstratified or intrusive. The fabrics present are all commonly found and most common are glazed earthenwares dating from the mid-16th to 19th centuries.

The lithics
Jacky Sommerville

A total of 13 worked flints came from unstratified contexts or were residual. Cortex suggests exploitation of both primary (e.g. chalk or clay-with-flints) and secondary (e.g. river gravel) sources. The nearest chalk deposits lie c. 24km to the south and c. 32km to the east (BGS 2021). The two residual blades and a flake from trackway ditch 1278, suggest that at least some of the flints are likely to be of Mesolithic or Early Neolithic date.

The Roman coins
E. R. McSloy

Eight Roman coins were recorded, all of copper alloy and of the Late Empire. Only two could be fully identified due to their poor condition. All but one came from demolition or later deposits, including the earliest identifiable coin, a radiate of Victorinus of c. AD 268-70. A further two radiates of the period c. AD 260-90 were recorded including one which is almost certainly a (barbarous) contemporary copy. One is very heavily worn and not identifiable, whilst the remainder are 4th-century issues, the latest of c. AD 330-35. One of the fully identifiable coins was the only one from a pre-demolition context, the Period 3iii-iv industrial spread 1398. A nummus of Crispus dating to c. AD 324, it is notable as being from one of the less-common issuing mints represented among 4th-century British finds, coming from Thessalonica in Greece.

The metal objects
E. R. McSloy

A total of 1,585 metal objects was recovered during evaluation and excavation, comprising some 1,556 of iron, 24 of copper alloy and five of lead or lead alloy. The assemblage is dominated by iron nails, hobnails or very fragmentary material. The large bulk of the assemblage can be assumed to date broadly to the Roman period. Objects which are stylistically dateable are limited to the few brooches and bracelet fragments; these are suggestive of activity spanning the 1st, 2nd and late 3rd to 4th centuries. A catalogue of objects arranged by function-based grouping is included elsewhere (CA 2021) and summarised here (Table 3).

Initial spatial analysis indicated that most of the metal objects occurred within and around the stone-built structures located in the north-east part of the site. Only a few metal objects came from the rest of the excavated area, although they included the copper-alloy tweezers (Ra. 26; Fig. 14, no. 8) from the primary fill of Period 2ii ditch 1104, indicating it was likely to be filling during the Roman period. These have an incised saltire cross at the spring and plain, strip-like blades, and conform to a grouping with a marked western distribution (Eckardt and Crummy 2008, 152-53).

There did not appear to be any particular concentrations within the main distribution of metal objects around the buildings. Only one object, an iron hammer (Fig. 15, no. 14), can with near certainty be related to industrial (blacksmithing) activity, although this object was recorded as a surface find from a cleaning layer in the area around the Building 1602/1603. Smiths' hammers of this period are relatively widely known, the British finds including examples from several metalworkers' hoards (Manning 1985, 5). The features of this example which support a metalworking use are its convex head and the angular expansion around the eye (*ibid.*). The latter feature is present on a smith's hammer from a 4th-century dated context from Usk (Manning 1995, 247) and an example from Vindolanda (Jackson 1985, 139, no. 52). The weight (422g) and cross pein form of the Bancombe Road example are consistent with what Manning terms 'hand hammers'. Metalworkers other than blacksmiths may have used such hammers, although this one is larger than those which might be expected to have been used by jewellers or for delicate, finishing work.

Other tools, including a probable drill bit and awl (Fig. 15, nos 12, 13), hint at other craft-related activity. A proportion of the material to which no certain function can be assigned may represent waste or scrap material related to blacksmithing. Few items provide a clue to the types of object manufactured or repaired, although it seems likely that the operation served the needs of the local estate or community with nails, structural fittings, domestic utensils and agricultural implements. There was a large number of nails (390). The majority consist of forged forms with square-sectioned shafts and flattened heads, comparable with the common Roman 'carpentry' forms, which Manning (1985, 32) classified as his Type 1. Additionally, there were 717 iron hobnails and 29 shoe cleats of typical Roman type from the site, with a large number recorded from the area of Building 1602/1603. Almost all have 'clenched' shanks, indicating they had been utilised and suggesting that they may have been intended for 'recycling' rather than representing finished 'product'. It is plausible that objects such as a cleaver (which corresponds to Manning's Type 2a), which was recorded from the area of Building(s) 1602/1603, was a product of this workshop or was perhaps intended for repair.

TABLE 3 METAL FINDS SUMMARY BY MATERIAL AND FUNCTIONAL CATEGORY

Functional	Type	Copper alloy	Iron	Lead alloy	Total	Category Total
dress/personal	bracelet	3			**3**	**759**
adornment	brooch	5			**5**	
	hobnail		722		**722**	
	shoe cleat		29		**29**	
fasteners and fittings	nail		390		**390**	**393**
	rove		2		**2**	
	staple		1		**1**	
household	pot leg (post-med)	1			**1**	**3**
	pot mend			1	**1**	
	vessel frag		1		**1**	
structural fittings	hinge pivot		1		**1**	**1**
toiletry	object	1			**1**	**2**
	tweezers	1			**1**	
tool	awl?		1		**1**	**4**
	cleaver		1		**1**	
	drill bit?		1		**1**	
	knife handle	1			**1**	
tools (metalworking)	hammer		1		**1**	**1**
transport	horseshoe (post-med)		1		**1**	**1**
waste	waste	1		4	**5**	**5**
indeterminate	bar		2		**2**	**416**
	lump		46		**46**	
	fragment	4	341		**345**	
	object (post-med)	2			**2**	
	ring	1			**1**	
	rod	1			**1**	
	sheet	1	2		**3**	
	strip		14		**14**	
	wire	2			**2**	
Totals		**24**	**1,556**	**5**	**1,585**	**1,585**

Some evidence for copper-alloy working was also recorded in the form of casting waste. It is unclear if any among the copper-alloy objects, a number of which were recorded from the area of Building(s) 1602/1603, relate to this activity. It is possible that items such as five fragmentary brooches (Fig. 13, nos 1-4) which pre-date the suggested date of the smithing activity (such as a 1st-century AD Durotrigian form, Fig. 13, no. 1), are scrap items intended for 'recycling', but several were deposited after the main activity in the buildings, often occurring in the demolition deposits. Such objects are typical of the small, personal items which might be expected to represent casual losses. The same could be said of three copper-alloy bracelet fragments (Fig. 13, nos 4-7), a broken toilet spoon or spatula and a knife or razor handle (Fig. 14, nos 9, 10) which came from demolition deposits but probably date to the 2nd or earlier 3rd century.

Illustrated objects

Brooches (Fig. 13)

1. Strip-like bow, narrowing to foot with simple catchplate. Pin missing. Hinged (rolled-under at head) with low, wide crest with ring-and-dot stamps (x3). Mackreth's (2011) Durotrigian form where decoration is limited to the upper bow: sub-type DURO6b (*ibid*., 149). Length 51.5mm. Ra. 204. External surface deposit 1507.
2. Joining fragments from sprung Trumpet brooch (pin missing). Eight coil spring mounted between two lugs and with internal chord. Possibly with iron repair. The central knop is petalled and runs around the bow, with mouldings (one) above and below (two). Lower bow plain and terminating in heavy, petalled foot knob. Mackreth's Type TR 1a1a (*ibid*., 116). Length 75mm. Ra. 85. Sub-surface deposit 1332.
3. Fragment consisting of foot/catchplate and part of lower bow. The faceted bow, heavy foot and geometrical decoration to the catch identify it as from a Trumpet form. Ra. 234. Deposit 1514.
4. Upper bow fragment from hinged Trumpet brooch variant. The head and headloop are flat, with a wide hinge behind (pin is missing). The surviving upper bow is concave, with a central knop consisting of three cross-mouldings, the lower two of which are beaded. The surviving lower bow is facetted. Width at head 19.5mm. Ra. 219. Layer 1522 (sub-division of layer 1398).

Fig. 13 Copper-alloy objects – brooches (1-4), and bracelets (5-7)

Bracelets (Fig. 13)

5. Medial fragment. Two strand type cable form bracelet/armlet. External diam. c. 60mm; thickness 2.5mm. Ra. 173. Demolition layer 1419 (sub-division of layer 1396).
6. Medial fragment. Two strand type cable form bracelet/armlet, crudely made from strip-like wire. External diam. c. 40mm; thickness 2.4mm. Ra. 149. Demolition layer 1394 (sub-division of layer 1377).
7. Terminal fragment. Two strand type with looped-over terminal. Thickness 1.6mm. Ra. 147. Surface find from machine stripping, layer 1307 (sub-division of layer 1005).

Toilet, surgical or pharmaceutical objects (Fig. 14)

8. Copper-alloy tweezers. Incised saltire cross at spring and plain, strip-like blades. Conforms to Eckardt and Crummy's (Roman-dated) saltire panel grouping, which has a marked western distribution (Eckardt and Crummy 2008, 152-53). The butted suspension ring is of a different alloy. Length 44.5mm; width 5.8mm. Ra. 26. Ditch 1088 (primary fill 1089).
9. Copper-alloy toilet spoon or spatula. Distorted and incomplete, broken at the junction with the implement end. At the broken end is a conical expansion with collar below. Below this are two baluster mouldings with a ribbed square moulding between. The lower part of the shaft is plain before terminating in stylised animal head with blunt snout. Ra. 153. Length 120mm; diam. 4-7mm. Sub-surface layer 1384.
10. Cast copper-alloy tubular knife or razor handle. Tapers slightly, the wider end with more elaborate baluster-like mouldings. A small section of the iron ?blade survives, projecting from the narrower end and there is disc-like end cap (now detached) securing the tang and separated from the handle by a wooden pommel, traces of which survive mineralised. The central section of the handle features decoration as enamelled inlay consisting of two, paired bands of opposed triangular cells, these alternately coloured red and blue (compare, for example, PAS: HESH-C9E243). Length (handle) 74mm; diam. (handle) 16mm-10mm;

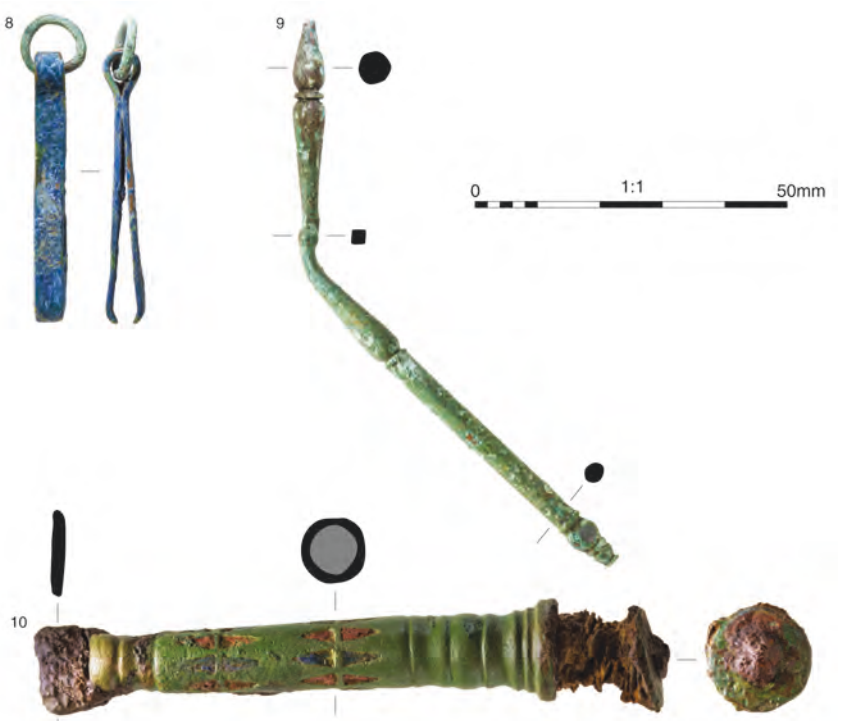

Fig. 14 Copper-alloy objects – tweezers (8), spoon or spatula handle (9), and a tubular knife or razor handle (10)

Fig. 15 Iron objects – cleaver (11), drill bit (fragment) (12), tanged implement (awl?) (13), hammer head (14) and hinge pivot/staple (15)

diam. (end cap) 17mm. Ra. 163. Demolition layer 1418 (sub-division of layer 1396).

Tools (Fig. 15)

11. Iron cleaver. Socketed handle, with straight back continuing line of handle and convex edge. The handle socket is damaged. Corresponds to Manning's Type 2a (Manning 1985). Length 211mm; (max) width of blade 72mm. Ra. 2503. Evaluation deposit 620 (interior of Period 3 buildings).
12. Iron drill bit (fragment). Only the pyramidal head and part of the square-section shaft are preserved (compare Manning 1985, 25-27). Surviving length 52mm; thickness of shaft 10mm-6mm. Ra. 20. Sub-surface layer 1005.
13. Iron tanged implement (awl?). Both ends are damaged and identification is uncertain. Surviving length 128mm; thickness of shaft 11mm-6mm. Evaluation deposit 607 (wall of 1603).
14. Iron hammer head. Cross pein form, the pein curving to the terminal. The face of the head is slightly expanded and convex. The circular eye is set within an angular (lozengiform) central expansion. Length 129mm; width (max) 48mm; diam. at head 28mm; weight 422g. Ra. 12. Surface find from machine stripping, layer 1005.

Structural fitting (Fig. 15)

15. Iron hinge pivot/staple. L-shaped. (Manning 1985, 126). Length 190mm; width x 70mm. Ra. 133. Sub-surface find from machine stripping, layer 1306.

The glass

E. R. McSloy

A bead recovered from the subsoil, is of opaque blue glass and of small, rectangular segmented type (Guido 1978, 91-92). Although they may occur earlier, such beads are mostly associated with the necklaces and other jewellery forms known from grave finds dating to the 3rd and 4th centuries. A natural, blue-coloured vessel glass fragment from a Period 4 demolition deposit is identifiable as being from a mould-blown vessel of square or polygonal form. Such vessels were among the most common of vessels in use in Roman

Britain, used as containers for a range of commodities and common to the period from the later 1st to 3rd centuries AD. Another fragment in pale yellowish-green glass from the same deposit probably came from a free-blown tableware vessel. It has suffered some distortion probably as the result of heat. The poorer quality, bubbly glass suggests a date in the 3rd or 4th centuries.

The worked bone
Claire Collier-Jones

A single item of worked bone was recovered from a Period 4 demolition layer (Ra. 154), a Crummy Type 3 pin (see Crummy 1983) with a more or less spherical head and a small degree of swell to the shaft (Fig. 16). It can be dated broadly on typological grounds to the later Roman period (3rd to early 5th century).

The worked stone
Ruth Shaffrey

A small worked stone assemblage was recovered mainly from demolition or later deposits. This included tools for a range of processing tasks; a hone included in a Period 4 demolition deposit within the buildings may have been employed in the industrial activity. It is an elongated cobble that, although not deliberately reshaped, has a modified profile due to use for sharpening all along one edge which has created a long facet. A quartz cobble, also from demolition, had been well used as a polisher. Fragments from two lias limestone crude mortars or grinding stones came from subsoil deposits. Half a disc-shaped spindle whorl was recovered from Period 3ii southern trackway ditch 1277. This is decorated with a pattern of small circular dots on both faces and around the circumference. Most numerous is a collection of six stone discs. All are made of lias and each has been chipped into an approximately circular shape. The discs are all small, measuring between 26mm and 93mm in diameter. Structural stone includes a single diagnostic piece of sandstone stone roofing, which was recovered from a Period 4 demolition deposit and other less certain small fragments from other demolition contexts as well as Period 2 hearth 1237 and the topsoil.

The worked stone indicates that a range of domestic or light industrial tasks took place on or near the site. It is not clear what the mortars were used for, but they are small, suggesting only small quantities of food/medicine were being processed. The collection of discs was probably not pot lids or stands like some larger discs, and it is likely that they served as counters, either in tally keeping or recreation.

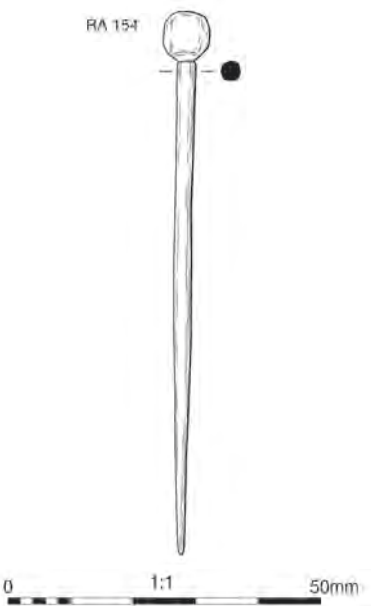

Fig. 16 Bone pin

The spindle whorl is an unusual, decorated example. Whorls made of stone (other than chalk and shale) are rarely decorated. Several large Somerset assemblages of spindle whorls, largely late Iron Age in date, have only produced a few decorated stone examples, and these generally with linear patterns (e.g. Glastonbury, Gray 1917; Cadbury Castle, Bellamy 2000, 181; and Meare, Gray 1948). A whorl from Meare has six indented dots on one face only (Gray 1948, pl. XXIII), whilst an example from Cadbury Castle has incised dot decoration on both faces (Alcock 1980, 674, fig. 9). However, these are both Late Iron Age in date and neither has dots around the circumference. Such decoration is more likely to be found on shale/jet or bone whorls and appears to be associated typically with more 'prestigious' spindle whorls (Marta Alberti pers. comm.). The likelihood is that this was an item of high personal value.

The shale objects
E. R. McSloy

Two objects, an armlet and spindle whorl were surface finds. A second spindle whorl came from a Period 4 demolition deposit 1377. All objects were fragmentary but can be dated to the Roman period. The source for all of the shale items is likely to be the Kimmeridge shale beds of Purbeck, Dorset, where there is abundant evidence for manufacture.

Lathe-made armlets and spindle whorls of the kind represented are widely known across southern Britain (Allason-Jones 2011). They may have been produced throughout the Roman period but are most common in the 3rd and 4th centuries. The plain armlet is of a well-known type, corresponding to the most common forms represented among large site groups, including that from Greyhound Yard, Dorchester (Mills 1993, 139-40). The spindle whorls provide some evidence for textile working at the site, though quite possibly at a limited, domestic, level. The bun-shaped form of the more complete example compares to Roman examples from Dorchester (*ibid.*, 142, no. 10) and Silchester (Lawson 1975).

The Ceramic Building Material
Peter Banks

Seven fragments (146g) made in a coarse sandy fabric with inclusions of flint and rock fragments were recovered from within the area of Buildings 1602, 1603 and 1604. They all appear to be fragments of tile with a slight curve and may represent fragments of imbrex (curved roof tile). Fifteen fragments of ceramic building material (260g) can, on the basis of their fabric and thickness, be dated to the Roman period. This material was made in oxidised coarse and fine sandy fabrics, some with calcareous or clay pellet inclusions. A fragment of brick was recovered from a subsoil deposit and a fragment of brick or tile was recorded from a Period 3 or 4 deposit.

The fired clay
Peter Banks

The fired clay occurred in coarse, medium and fine sandy, oxidised fabrics, some with calcareous, micaceous, clay pellet or grog inclusions. Thirteen fragments exhibit flat surfaces and two fragments, from Period 4 demolition deposits, contain fingertip impressions. This would be consistent with fired-hardened daub. Two fragments, from a subsoil layer and a Period 4 demolition deposit also exhibit signs of vitrification suggesting that they have been subjected to high temperatures. It is possible these fragments represent the lining of a hearth or similar feature.

Ironworking
David Dungworth

The excavation recovered material evidence for smithing of iron. This comprised waste slag (mostly recovered as bulk finds from contexts surrounding Building 1603), and hammerscale (recovered from soil samples by sieving and the use of a magnet). The examination of the smithing hearth cakes demonstrates that the Somerton smith used coal as fuel for smithing. A full report is included in the unpublished report (CA 2021) and summarised here.

The waste slag comprises just over 22kg of largely amorphous material (cf. Historic England 2015); however, the presence of nearly 561g of hammerscale shows that iron smithing took place. Most of the hammerscale (440g) came from processing 40-litre environmental soil samples from deposits surrounding the building, with only 161g of hammerscale coming from the surviving workshop floor surface (311 samples each 100g). These soil samples also yielded 3,108g of other sorts of magnetic material, such as fired clay, fired iron-rich minerals, fragments of iron, etc (e.g. heat-magnetised residues). However, the richest soil sample contained only 9% hammerscale, which is lower than would be expected for a blacksmith's workshop (Dungworth and Wilkes 2009); it is likely that the workshop floor deposits have been truncated. Plotting of the density of the hammerscale within the samples did not reveal a coherent pattern which could be related to the features relating to metalworking activity. This appears to be a result of the way the deposits have been disturbed later.

The practice of the Somerton blacksmiths is more tangibly expressed in the 27 smithing hearth cakes (Fig. 17). These lumps of slag would form toward the base of the hottest part of the blacksmith's fire as the result of reactions between the metal, the fuel, and the ceramic walls of the hearth. Fourteen of these smithing hearth cakes have been sectioned and examined in detail. These show that ceramic lining (and melted ceramic) can be identified in most smithing hearth cakes. Figure 17 shows the partial melting of the ceramic hearth lining (brown) and the flow of this molten material (green) into the smithing hearth cake. Further details were investigated using a scanning electron microscope and are reported on fully elsewhere (CA 2021; Le Duc and Dungworth in prep.).

Figure 18A shows a flake of hammerscale which has begun to dissolve in the surrounding slag but is still recognisable as hammerscale. Figure 18B shows a partially burnt coal inclusion. These inclusions were difficult to discern as they are almost invisible to the scanning electron microscope. Their identity as partially burnt coal is based primarily on chemical analysis which shows they are rich in carbon with small amounts of sulphur. Figure 19 shows that the Somerton smithing slags are unusually rich in aluminium and sulphur. It is proposed that this provides further evidence for the use of coal to heat iron by the smiths (see Dearne and Branigan 1995; Dunster and Dungworth 2012).

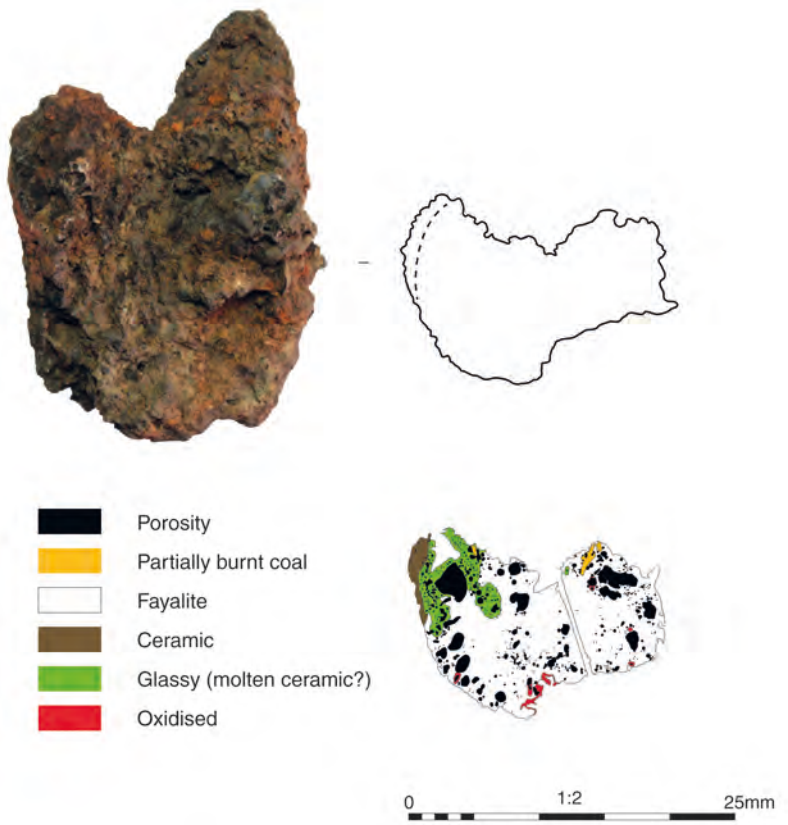

Fig. 17 Smithing Hearth Cake #23 and its cross-section

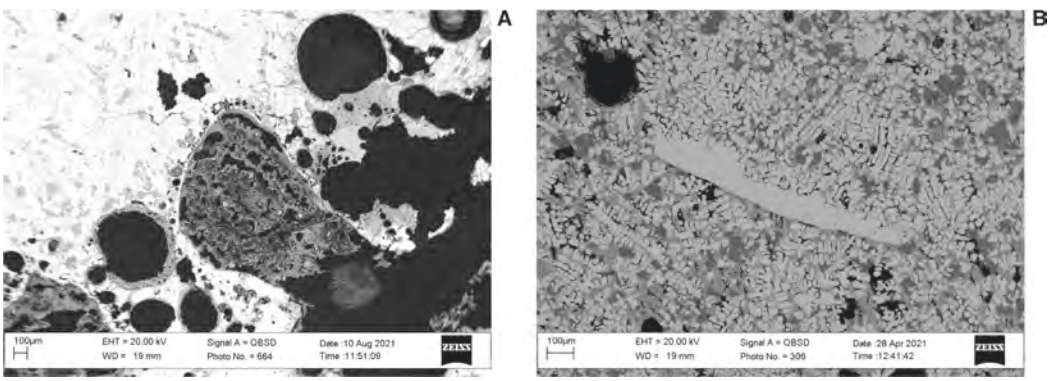

Fig. 18 A - SEM image of a fragment of hammerscale trapped in SHC#1;
B - SEM image of partially burnt coal inclusion in SHC#21

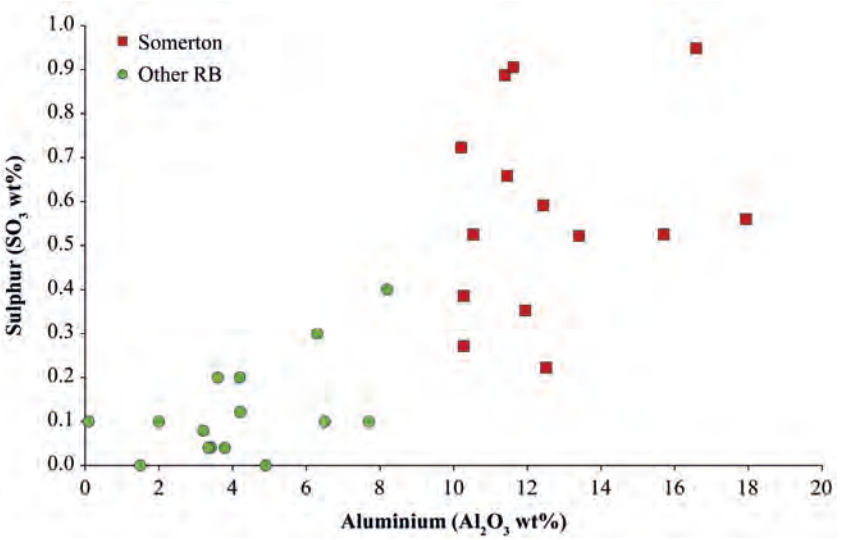

Fig. 19 Plot of aluminium and sulphur content in the Somerton slag compared to other contemporary samples

Coal
Clare Randall

Coal amounting to 320g was recovered, mainly from the area of the buildings. Roughly half of the contexts were components of the spread of material over Area 1 removed as a sub-soil layer. However, coal also came from the Period 3 industrial waste spread 1398, other deposits inside the building which were overlain by an ABG and demolition spread, and the Period 4 demolition layers. The Period 3iv deposit 1514 in the far north-east corner of the site also contained it. A few pieces of coal also occurred in the northern trackway ditches, of both the earlier and later phases, and in the later phases of ditches associated with the enclosure appended to the south of the trackway. As most of the smithing slag was recovered from contexts outside the building, there was some coincidence between slag and coal.

The human remains
Sharon Clough

Neonatal remains were found within Building 1603. Two articulated individuals lay on their left sides in a crouched position with their heads to wall 1390. Additional neonate remains occurred within the fills in the building but not in identified graves. At a minimum there were probably a further five individuals mainly buried close to walls (Fig. 11). Full details are included elsewhere (CA 2021) and summarised here.

SK1523 was crouched on its left side within a disturbed Period 3i soil deposit presumably in a grave, though no cut was visible. The head was at the north end closest to the wall; it was relatively complete and in good condition. Metrical data suggest an age of 38-40 weeks (Scheuer *et al.* 1980) or 38-44 weeks (Gowland and Chamberlain 2002) in utero with which dental development was consistent. This represents a full-term individual, indicating death at or around the time of birth. SK1571 was similarly positioned, although possibly later in the deposit sequence than SK1523. The bone condition was also good, but it was slightly less complete than SK1523. Measurement of the left humerus indicated an age of 40-48 weeks (Gowland and Chamberlain 2002) or 40 weeks (Scheuer *et al.* 1980), also a full-term individual.

In addition, individual and small groups of neonatal bones occurred elsewhere in the deposits. The bone condition was similar to that of the articulated burials. Notably, one group, recorded as part of animal bone group Ra. 168 contained a significant number of elements. It appears to represent another neonate grave also abutting wall 1390 of building 1603. Pit 1537 close to wall 1390 (assigned to Periods 3vi-4) also included a number of neonatal elements and was cut by a pit containing sheep ABG Ra. 230. A single element came from the industrial residue spread 1398 (Period 3iv). A number of individual elements came from the sub-surface deposits across this area. There

are no repeating elements, so there is a probability that they all originated from the same individual.

Discussion

In the case of the two articulated individuals, they could be aged to around the time of birth (up to one month of age), and the other elements/groups are consistent with this. Neonate burials are often found in and around Roman buildings; they are also recovered from ditch fills and adjacent to boundary ditches, either isolated or part of small groups (Pearce 1999; Moore 2009; Smith *et al*. 2018). Although only two graves were identified during the excavation, there were originally several others. It is likely that the apparent dispersal and absence of clear grave cuts relate to the disturbance of the deposits noted above.

Frequent associations of neonate burials with corn dryers, malting ovens and animal burials (particularly lamb) may be associated with fertility, harvest and regeneration (Scott 1991; Millett and Gowland 2015). These associations were noted at the site of the villa at Sandy Lane, Cannington Bypass, Somerset (Hart and Mudd 2018) where four neonates (two males and two females) were aligned alongside the wall of a gallery room of the main residence. The burials from Bancombe Road, as observed at other contemporary sites, reflect the high infant mortality rates at the time combined with a desire to keep the infants close by.

TABLE 4 SPECIES REPRESENTATION (NISP). H= HAND-COLLECTED; S= SAMPLES

Taxa	**Period 2**	**Period 3**		**Period 5**
	H	H	S	H
Cattle		126		2
Sheep/ goat	1	991*	68	1
Sheep		49	1	
Pig		29		
Equid		12		
Canid		2		
Cat		3*		
Domestic fowl		9*		
Field vole			5	
Total identified	1	1,221		3
Unidentified mammal		13		2
Large mammal	12	394		1
Medium mammal	5	869		7
Micro-mammal			21	
Bird		2		
Total	**18**	**2,499**	**21**	**13**

The animal bone
Matilda Holmes

A moderate assemblage of animal bone was recovered, largely from 2nd- to 4th-century AD features. A full report is provided elsewhere (CA 2021) and summarised here. The late prehistoric assemblage only comprised sheep/goat tibia from ring ditch part of 1121 (Table 4), and a few unidentified fragments.

The bones were generally in good condition. A low incidence of gnawing suggests burial soon after disposal, although the prevalence of loose teeth does indicate post-depositional movement. A low proportion of butchered bones implies minimal processing, and few bones were burnt. There were no obvious deposits of craft-working or skin-processing waste. A considerable proportion of the assemblage, however, was attributable to a series of associated bone groups which mainly occurred within Building 1603 (Fig. 10).

The majority of bones could be dated to the 2nd to 4th centuries (Periods 3 and 4). This assemblage was dominated by the remains of sheep/goats (of which only sheep could be positively identified), comprising over 80% of all fragments identified to taxon. Cattle bones were next most common, with a few pigs, equids, canids (including a large dog), cats and chickens (domestic fowl) also represented. Bulk soil samples produced bones of micro-mammals including field vole (Table 4).

The assemblage overall was dominated by sheep/goat remains, most of which were associated with the stone buildings, and a large proportion of which were deposited in groups. Some of this material was in articulation and was incorporated in the deposits which filled the footprints of the Period 3 buildings. Often these groups of disarticulated material were from more than one individual. In general terms sheep/goat bones came from all parts of the carcass, indicating that complete animals were brought to and disposed of on site. However, there was a slight over-representation of hind limb elements and phalanges, suggesting that hind limbs were either brought to this part of the site, or that fore limbs and axial elements were taken away. Some limbs were clearly deposited with some soft tissue remaining, as testified by small carpals and tarsals and loose epiphyses associated with corresponding metaphyses.

TABLE 5 MANDIBLE AND TOOTH WEAR STAGES FOR THE MAJOR DOMESTICATES. ABG MANDIBLES INCLUDED

Cattle		**Sheep/ goat**		**Pig**	
Stage	**NISP**	**Stage**	**NISP**	**Stage**	**NISP**
A	1	A		A	
B	2	B	1	B	1
C		C	6	C	
D		D	2	D	1
E		E	7	E	
F		F	9	F	
G	1	G	4	G	
H	2	GH	10	H	
J	2	H	2	J	
K		J			
Total	**8**		**41**		**2**

Cattle remains were the second most abundant identified species, with all parts of the carcass represented, although dominated by loose teeth. The limited ageing information suggests two broad groups of animals: calves that died within the first year of life, and older, adult animals (Table 5). Both males and females were present whilst age-related changes to a sacrum and lumbar vertebrae and exostosis on a first phalanx may indicate draught animals (see Bartosiewicz *et al*. 1997). Pigs were culled as sub-adults for meat, whilst three canines indicate two males and a female. The perinatal bones of a piglet and a chick were also recorded, reflecting raising of young animals on or near the site. The few equid and canid bones were fused, suggesting adult individuals. Two associated bone groups (ABGs) were recovered from 2nd - 4th-century contexts: a pair of chicken legs (from a Period 3i deposit in the north-east of the site) from a bird not in lay; and a partial juvenile cat skeleton (from a Period 4 demolition layer), whose measurements indicate that it was probably a domestic cat.

The deposits of associated sheep/goat bone occurred in both Period 3 and 4 deposits, that is, associated with both the lifetime and demolition of the buildings (Table 6). Differing amounts of bone as well as different portions of the carcass were represented in individual deposits. There were very few butchery marks and most resulted either from the separation of the lower hind leg at the hock, or disarticulation of the carcass through the joints of the major limb bones, and occasionally mid-shaft. A few filleting marks were also observed. There was nothing to indicate that intensive butchery was carried out.

Overall, the mortality data indicate all ages were present, from the porous bones of perinatal lambs

TABLE 6 SHEEP/GOAT ASSOCIATED GROUPS FROM BUILDING 1603

Period	Ra. No	Context	Group/deposit	MNI	Body parts and age
3	164	1437	Demolition deposit 1438	1	Head elements; juvenile sheep/ goat at wear stage C
3	167	1441	demolition deposit 1442	3 inc sheep	All parts of carcass, but bias towards the lower hind limbs and vertebrae. juvenile and mature animals
3	Ra. 247 /248	1574		2	Largely hind limb bones, lacking extremities; some axial elements from the rear part of the animal; juvenile and sub-adult animals
¾	RA230	1539		3	All parts of the carcass were present; juveniles at wear stages B and D and an adult at wear stage G
4	RA156	1416	layer 1396	2 inc one female	All parts of the carcass; numerous vertebrae; over-representation of hind limb elements. Juvenile and adult animals, tooth wear stages C and F
4	Ra. 168	1443	Deposit 144	4	fore and hind limb and some axial element
4	-	1444*	Deposit 144	5	fore and hind limb and some axial element, plus metapodials and foot elements
4	RA251	-	deposit 1575	1	A few bones from the head and lower legs; juvenile

** if contexts 1443 and 1444 are considered together the combined MNI is 5. A total of nine mandibles provided aging data (some at least representing pairs) and these were divided between five at Payne stage C (juvenile) and four at H (old adult)*

to old adults (Table 5), although there were no very elderly animals. Long bone fusion indicates that most animals were culled as sub-adults, which is reflected in the tooth wear. Of the ageable mandibles, two-thirds were of the young or older adult category, with little evidence of first winter culling, but consistent with animals culled largely at prime meat weight. Three examples of periodontal disease and one of degenerative change in a joint are consistent with the older individuals present. Four male and two female sheep were recorded.

The groups of sheep/goat bone from Building 1603, probably accumulated over a considerable period of time and as all ages and both sexes are represented this does not suggest selection or a particular time of year. The disposal of groups of disarticulated bones implies episodes of the slaughter for a similar, repeated, and particular purpose. There was some focus on the meat bearing hind limbs. Complete animals, which these do not appear to represent, might more obviously suggest closure or votive deposits. Low numbers of perinatal bones suggest these were not lambing casualties. However, they are also unlikely to be general refuse, given the focus on the one species. The absence of intensive butchery means that systematic processing for preservation is also unlikely. Consumption via communal eating or feasting, at which specific joints of sheep were preferred, would account for the disarticulated nature of the assemblage, over-representation of hind limbs and dearth of other taxa. The collocation with the neonatal human remains described above is of interest.

The elevated abundance of sheep/goat in this assemblage is notable. Whilst high proportions of sheep/goats are commonly recorded on Roman rural sites (King 1999), they rarely represent over 60% of the assemblage. Fewer than 10% of contemporary assemblages have an abundance of sheep/goat over 60%, and the highest are temples or shrines, industrial complexes or included numerous ABGs in their counts (Allen *et al*. 2015).

The wood charcoal
Sheila Boardman

Wood charcoal remains from seven soil samples were investigated including from a later prehistoric ditch and possible hearth and various deposits associated with the Roman buildings. A report is provided elsewhere (CA 2021) and summarised here (Table 7).

TABLE 7 CHARCOAL

Area		2	1a	1a	1a	1a	1a	1
Period		Period 2	Period 3	Period 3	Period 3	Period 3	Period 3	Period 3
Feature Type		Ditch	Demolition layer	Metal working area	Dump from smithy?	Smithing hearth	Furnace flue	Hearth pit
Feature		2343	-	-	-	-	1535	1237
Context		2344	1442	1398	1514	1521	1490	1238
Sample		2113	826	830	834	844	848	506
Sample Type		bulk	bulk	bulk	bulk	bulk	bulk	bulk
Processed vol (L)		7	15	17	20	20	20	16
Taxon	**Common name**							
Rosaceae								
Prunus spinosa/domestica type	blackthorn/plum type	-	-	-	1r	-	-	22r
Prunus L.	blackthorn/plum/cherry	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Pomoideae	hawthorn group (see Key)	58r	19r	-	3	5	-	-
Fagaceae								
Quercus L.	oak	3h	-	12s	-	5s	-	-
cf. *Quercus* L.	cf. oak	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Betulaceae								
Alnus glutinosa/Corylus avellana	alder/hazel	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
Sapindaceae								
Acer campestre L.	field maple	-	-	-	3r	-	-	-

Oleaceae												
Fraxinus excelsior L.	ash	-	3	1	4	1	29r	-				
Caprifoliaceae												
cf. *Sambucus nigra* L.	cf. elder	-	-	1	-	-	-	-				
Indeterminate fragments		4	1	-	-	3	1	-				
Total fragments		66	23	15	11	14	30	25				
KEY - BA - Bronze Age. Counts include: h - heartwood; s - sapwood; r - roundwood; b - bark.												
*Pomoideae may include: *Crataegus* (hawthorn), *Malus* (apple), *Pyrus* (pear) &/or *Sorbus* (rowan, service, whitebeam) species.												

Period 2 – Iron Age/Early Romano-British

All but four of the identifiable fragments from Area 2 ditch 2343 were from hawthorn group/Pomoideae which includes hawthorn (*Crataegus*), crab-apple (*Malus*), pear (*Pyrus*) and rowan, whitebeam or service (*Sorbus*) species. These represent a mixture of woodland/woodland edge taxa and species associated with scrub or hedgerows. Up to a sixth of the hawthorn group fragments were from roundwood. The other remains were a few oak (*Quercus*)/ probable oak fragments. These probably represent a small dump of fuel refuse. Hearth pit 1237 contained mostly blackthorn/plum (*Prunus spinosa/domestica*) type, with some blackthorn/plum/cherry (*Prunus*), more likely blackthorn, two-thirds of which appears to be from roundwood.

Period 3 - Romano-British (2nd-4th centuries AD) and Period 4 - Demolition (4th centiry AD)

The fill of Periods 3iii-iv hearth 1605 had very few identifiable remains, but included oak and hawthorn group, and a fragment of ash. This wood was mostly from timbers. The fill of Periods 3iii-iv furnace flue 1535 had the largest number of identifiable fragments of all the samples from the Roman buildings. Only ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) was identified and there seems to be a mixture of roundwood and timber fragments.

The Period 3 industrial waste spread around a metalworking area (1398) had mostly oak sapwood remains, suggesting that oak timbers or charcoal were used to fuel the furnace. There were single fragments of alder/hazel (*Alnus glutinosa/Corylus avellana*), ash and possible elder (cf. *Sambucus nigra*). An animal bone group Ra. 167 in a Period 4 demolition layer (1442) produced a small deposit of hawthorn group (*Pomoideae*) charcoal, together with a few fragments of ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*). Around half of the hawthorn group fragments were from narrow roundwood, suggesting some of this material was from underwood, scrub or hedgerows, rather than mature trees.

The Period 3iv deposit 1514 in the north-east corner of the site had very few identifiable remains, here a mixture of ash, hawthorn group and field maple (*Acer campestre*), with one blackthorn/plum (*Prunus spinosa/domestica*) type roundwood fragment. Plum (*P. domestica*) is a probable Roman introduction (van der Veen *et al*. 2008) but blackthorn (*P. spinosa*) and hawthorn are commonly found growing together in thorny scrub.

General discussion and conclusions

The charcoal in prehistoric ditch 2387 was dominated by hawthorn group remains, which hints that the local landscape was already quite open by this time. Blackthorn dominated the Period 2 hearth. In the Roman period, local iron working activities would have placed pressures on fuel resources and woodlands. However, it is not possible to assess how these were affected as the wood assemblage is too poor to assess management practices.

The Roman period charcoal assemblage is unusual. While the majority of samples were from deposits associated with metalworking, these were charcoal poor. Also, rather than thin spreads of remains of different woody taxa (reflecting multiple smelting, smithing, or dumping episodes), a single main taxon was generally present, suggesting these are remnants of more discrete activities. Some features were possibly cleaned out between uses. An example of a probably specific event, sample 826 was from an ABG in a demolition layer and was dominated by hawthorn group and probable blackthorn roundwood. Roundwood of wood and charcoal are important for rapid heat and were also used to help raise temperatures of ovens, furnaces and so on (Gale and Cutler 2000).

The more thermally efficient taxa, oak and ash, dominated two samples from the furnace flue 1535 and industrial waste spread 1398. The latter was mostly derived from timber. In general, larger timbers and timber charcoal (especially that of oak) are used where high temperatures and long-lived heat are required, for example, for smelting and cremations. It is not possible to tell from the charcoal remains whether wood fuels or prepared charcoal were used. Wood and charcoal fuels (both often from roundwood) are used in iron working. Until coal became widely available, charcoal fuels would have been essential for iron smelting, so the material recovered from these features needs to be considered with that in mind.

The plant remains and molluscs
Sarah F. Wyles

A total of 32 bulk soil samples from a range of features and deposits of late prehistoric to Late Roman date. Mollusc shells were noted in 28 of the bulk samples. A full report is provided elsewhere (CA 2021) and is summarised here.

Period 2 - Iron Age/Early Romano-British

The six samples from the Area 2 ring ditch 2386 contained very little charred material which provide no indication of the activities taking place in the vicinity. The few molluscs were open country and intermediate species, although there were a few shells of the amphibious species *Anisus leucostoma*, a species which thrives in areas subject to seasonal flooding and desiccation. The small assemblage from Period 2 hearth 1237 included an indeterminate cereal grain and seeds of goosefoot (*Chenopodium* sp.), vetch/wild pea (*Vicia/Lathyrus* sp.) and clover/medick (*Trifolium/Medicago* sp.). The low number of mollusc shells were those of open country and intermediate species.

Period 3 - Romano-British (2nd-4th centuries AD) and Period 4 - Demolition (4th century AD)

The samples from the north trackway ditch 1373 contained few remains. These included a spelt wheat (*Triticum spelta*) glume base. Spelt wheat was the predominant wheat in southern Britain during the Roman period (Greig 1991). A further sample from the same ditch but closer to the building produced a moderate charred assemblage. This was dominated by cereal remains, which represented around two-thirds of the assemblage. The cereal remains included those of spelt wheat and emmer wheat (*Triticum dicoccum*), with a smaller amount of barley (*Hordeum vulgare*). There were almost equal numbers of grain and chaff elements. Some of the weed seeds, such as knotgrass (*Polygonum aviculare*), black bindweed (*Fallopia convolvulus*), vetch/wild pea, clover/medick and rye grass/fescue (*Lolium/Festuca* sp.), are those of species typical of grassland, field margins and arable habitats and are likely to have been brought in with the crops. Other species such as branched bur-reed (*Sparganium erectum*) thrive in wet environments and may have been brought on to site for use as floor coverings. This charred plant assemblage may be reflective of crop processing waste together with other domestic waste material. The crop processing waste is likely to have derived from a late stage in the crop processing procedure when hulled grain, which had been stored as semi-cleaned grain or in spikelet form, was de-husked prior to hardening and milling (Hillman 1981; 1984).

Small assemblages were recovered from Periods 3iii-iv hearth 1605, and furnace stoke holes 1535 and 1582. These included a few grain and chaff fragments, and it is possible that crop processing waste may have been used as tinder. The other remains included a seed of flax (*Linum usitatissimum*), which may have been

grown as a crop. Seeds of probable common spike-rush (*Eleocharis* cf. *palustris*) may have been brought in with the water used in the metalworking process or with material for use floor covering material. The industrial waste spread 1398 contained only small quantities of charred remains. A few fragments of indeterminate grain and charcoal were recorded from around infant burial SK 1571. Animal bone groups Ra. 247/248 within Periods 3iii-iv deposit 1575 contained little charred material. This included remains of barley and hulled wheat, and charcoal fragments.

All of the mollusc assemblages were dominated by open country and intermediate species. The trackway ditch also contained some aquatic species suggesting the exploitation of some of the wetter local environments, and there is some indication of longer damp grass or marshy environments in the vicinity from the industrial waste spread 1398 and amongst ABGs Ra. 247/248. The shells of *Anisus leucostoma* in stoke hole 1535 are more likely to have been brought in with water or with floor covering material.

Moderately small numbers of charred plant remains were recovered from around animal bone groups. Samples from Ra. 164, which was associated with deposits dating to Periods 3iii-v, were dominated by cereal remains, including spelt and emmer wheat. Weed seeds included common spike-rush and branched bur-reed (*Sparganium erectum*). This may reflect waste material from de-husking hulled grain stored semi-cleaned or in spikelet form (Hillman 1981; 1984), or possible floor coverings. Sample 826 from around similarly dated animal bone group ABG 167, and sample 827 from around animal bone group Ra. 168 (Periods 3iii-v into Period 4) contained low quantities of charred material likely to be representative of dispersed domestic waste material.

The few mollusc shells from the sample in Ra. 164 were mainly those of the open country and intermediate species. *Bithynia* is a species indicative of moving water and the opercula are likely to have been brought in with the common spike rush and branched bur reeds. The molluscs from Ra. 167 are also indicative of a well-established open landscape, but with some areas of longer grass. The aquatic species indicate exploitation of wetter environments.

Summary

The charred assemblages provide some limited information to augment that from other contemporary assemblages locally. Spelt wheat was the predominant wheat in other Romano-British deposits in the area; spelt wheat, with some barley, emmer wheat and free-threshing wheat, was recorded from the nearby site at Fulwell Lane, Faulkland (Wyles and Cobain 2018). Spelt wheat was recovered with barley and possible emmer wheat from Cannards Grave (Hinton 2002), and with barley and free-threshing wheat at Fosse Lane, Shepton Mallet (Straker 2001; Jones 2012). The range of weed seeds include species generally typical of grassland, field margins and arable environments.

It is likely that the crops were being grown nearby but there is no indication of any large-scale crop production and processing taking place. There is also an indication that the local wetter environments were being exploited for reeds and spike-rushes, possibly for use as floor coverings. The mollusc assemblages are indicative of a well-established open environment with some small areas of long/unkempt occasionally damp grass and some wetter environments.

DISCUSSION
Clare Randall

The findings from the Bancombe Road site need to be seen, not only in the light of its proximity to Bradley Hill, but also the remains c. 100m away excavated by Wessex Archaeology to the north-east of the site, on the north side of Bradley Hill Lane (Figs 1 and 2). Evaluation and excavation work in advance of construction of the new Somerton Primary School have produced both later prehistoric and Romano-British period remains (WA 2020a).

Residual Middle Iron Age pottery was recovered during evaluation north of Bradley Hill Lane (WA 2020b). The Somerton Primary School site (WA 2020a), adjoining that area, to the north, contained numerous roundhouses, provisionally dated to the Middle to Late Iron Age, and the Late Iron Age or Late Iron Age/Early Romano-British period. Other structures included a four-post structure as well as pits and gullies. The Bancombe Road roundhouse is similar to the Somerton Primary School examples, consisting of wall foundation cuts without posts and provisionally assigned to the Late Iron Age (WA 2020a, 2).

Middle and Late Iron Age houses in the area are known as both post-built (e.g. Newtown Park, Langport, c. 6km to the south-west (Tabor 2020)), and as ring-ditches representing drip gullies or bedding trenches (e.g. Haygrove Park, Bridgwater (Randall 2020)). The Bancombe Road example was c. 10m in diameter, comparable with Haygrove Park which also had a flanking ditch on one side. This small complex, possibly a shifting series of houses maybe set within separate plots, was later enclosed during the Late Iron Age - Early Romano-British transitional period (Randall 2020). The arrangement of house and length of ditch (and the additional possible example in Area 1) at Bancombe Road apparently replicates

this arrangement of small-scale, generally open settlement associated with partial enclosure. Along with the activity to the north of Bancombe Road, there was possibly a quite broad area of dispersed later prehistoric settlement, although its chronology and full extent has not been established.

A number of ditches at Bancombe Road have been assigned to the Late Iron Age/Early Romano-British transition due to the presence of pottery which spans this period. Several land parcels seem to have been in use during this time, but their layout, function and sequence are not entirely clear. It seems that this area was somewhat peripheral well into the Romano-British period, with limited activity until the middle Roman period.

At some point, possibly in the 2nd century AD, a double ditched trackway was established, with an enclosure attached on its south side. Both the trackway ditches and associated enclosure exhibit episodes of re-establishment and realignment suggesting it continued in use over a long duration. There was, however, no apparent associated surface. The lack of metalling (albeit possibly lost to truncation through later ploughing) fits with it being a side road, although it may have had local significance.

The enclosure to the south of the trackway may have provided a paddock for the use of the buildings which developed to the north. However, the apparently open landscape to the south perhaps suggests that the building was located on the edges of the inhabited landscape. As well as providing a linking element in the local road network between settlements, it seemed that the track may have defined the settled landscape, confining it to the Bradley Hill promontory.

The trackway lay closely parallel to Bradley Hill Lane, in its current position on maps since the early 19th century. It crosses the escarpment on a north-east to south-west alignment. Projecting the track to the north-west it would pass the Bancombe Hill villa, c. 1km distant. Roman finds have occurred to the south-east of the villa, including a coin of Gordian III from the surface of Bancombe Road itself (Somerset HER 41473). Bancombe Hill is one of several villas between the Yeo and the Cary rivers, including Roman Farm villa at Park to the west (Dewar 1949), surrounded by Late Iron Age and Romano-British fields (Randall 2018). A trackway linking the villa estates and other settlement might be expected.

The Roman Road from Ilchester to Combwich (Somerset HER 11831) lies to the east, where it crosses the River Cary to the east of Somerton at Cary Bridge, before continuing north-west to the hillfort at Compton Dundon (Fig. 2). Projecting the trackway seen in this excavation to the east and following the topography along the edge of the escarpment above the River Cary, Cary Bridge is c. 1.5km distant. Running south, the Ilchester road passes through the Romano-British settlement at Catsgore, c. 4km to the south-east (Leech 1982) and meets the Fosse Way c. 6km to the east of Somerton.

Given the potential connectivity afforded by the track, the construction of a roadside building might not be surprising. The first evidence of building is not closely dated. Activity could have commenced in the later 1st- early 2nd century AD and includes a small number of stone surfaces. It is possible that these were accompanied by an initial structure, which may be represented by cut 1552 in the north-east corner of the excavated area. The first obvious structure, Period 3ii Building 1602, was truncated by later construction, and associated with a limited number of other features. It had a more square ground plan than its successor building but it is hard to identify its function.

Precise dating is also difficult, and Building 1602 may have been constructed at any point from the 2nd century onward. Similarly, there was little evidence of use of Bradley Hill before construction of three stone-built buildings, probably two houses, one with an attached barn, during the 4th century (Leech 1981, 181-82). When further information on the dating of the buildings to the north in the Wessex Archaeology investigations becomes available, the picture may be clearer. The remains of Building 1602 are fairly fragmentary, perhaps as a result of later reuse of masonry. The relatively insubstantial nature of all of these structures may be because stone only ever provided the foundations, and the superstructure was largely timber and other organic or more ephemeral materials. Leech (1981) notes that at Bradley Hill there was little fallen masonry to suggest construction up to eaves height.

During Periods 3iii-iv a second building (1603) was built partly over the remains of the earlier structure. Building 1603 was more rectangular and extended further south, apparently leading to the displacement and realignment of the track at its eastern end. The necessity of this effort suggests that a contemporary structure, road, or other obstruction, prevented expansion to the north, and that the building had a significance that warranted the re-routing of the track. The building certainly seems to have existed in relation to the route, and this may be no accident, facilitating access for those using its services and the practitioners benefitting from passing trade on a side road, as well as the needs of the settlement and inhabitants in the area to the north.

It seems clear that the buildings and other features at Bancombe Road were on the periphery of that settlement. What is less clear is the settlement's nature, which must await the detailed results of

the Wessex Archaeology investigations. The initial character of the buildings and their organization are highly suggestive of a similar settlement to Bradley Hill, but the proximity to the Bancombe Hill villa, and the connection afforded by the trackway may be significant; buildings comprising components of a villa estate might be considered. Understanding is still lacking of the nature of, and relationships between, the various elements, and the use of the immediate surroundings of the Bancombe Hill villa (or indeed, any other as yet undiscovered high status habitation). The potential to understand the greater whole should be considered in future work in the area.

The various buildings differ slightly in construction, but all use tabular blue lias blocks of varying thicknesses and sizes, and, where surviving best, with two courses, use a pattern of construction often seen locally during the Roman period. Courses of horizontally laid (larger) ashlar blocks lay over smaller and thinner tabular slabs in a distinctive 'herringbone' pattern. There was however only minimal evidence of the stone roof tiles commonly used in this area. The Bradley Hill buildings were constructed of the local lias with blocks laid horizontally on a pitched foundation. All three buildings had lias slab floors. Lias roofing tiles, possibly with ceramic imbrex tiles on the ridge, were used in at least one building. The recent investigations north of Bradley Hill Lane (WA 2020b) have revealed extensive Romano-British settlement evidence, also apparently predominantly dating to the 3rd and 4th centuries AD, and including two substantial lias-built buildings. These incorporated dressed stone, offset foundation courses with herringbone construction above, and evidence for flag floors (WA 2020b, 8), similar to Bradley Hill (Leech 1981). The Bancombe Road buildings are similar in tradition but seem less well appointed.

Deposits within Building 1603 indicated that it had been associated with some high temperature process. However, the fragmentary nature of the walls, in places reduced to the foundation course, has obscured its plan, including the location of the entrance. This was possibly on the east side where there was a break. This building seems to have been associated with a central hearth installation with flues/stoke holes, and a door in this location would have illuminated them and facilitated fuelling.

The activity which was carried on mainly involved iron smithing. The degree to which the process can be understood, the chronology of the activity, and its relationship with the building phases unfortunately has limitations. Metal objects, in common with other material, were relatively evenly spread across Area 1a and frequently present in the subsoil deposits and cannot be identified as products or recyclable material. Smithing slag occurred most frequently outside of the building footprint to the east and north-east, which can be explained as dumping of more bulky waste from the process. Within the buildings, there were clearly industrial residues. However, the overlying demolition deposits appear disturbed, along with much of what was probably the industrial residue originally associated with the activity. The structures themselves and their internal deposits have probably suffered from medieval and later ploughing as the area was recorded as in arable use in the Tithe apportionment of 1843 and was similarly used until recently. The industrial residue deposits were thereby rendered somewhat amorphous. This meant that a clear focus of metalworking activity was hard to ascertain other than it occurred within the buildings, with an area of waste disposal in the north-eastern part of the site.

However, whilst disturbed and of limited utility, the deposits within Building 1603 contained hammerscale, demonstrating iron smithing. The hammer found outside the building (Fig. 15, no. 14) underlines this. Hammerscale also occurred within the slag. Sampling of the area within Building 1603 which produced most hammerscale has, however, because of the later disturbance, failed to locate a focus for the working area to specifically consider its relation to the hearth or flues.

However, smithing hearth cakes, disposed of largely outside the building, provide more insight into the smithing practice on the site. There is clear evidence of coal being used as the fuel. Unburnt coal was also found across the same parts of the site. It is notable that whilst the wood charcoal from a flue included species suitable for high temperature working, it is generally somewhat lacking; coal may have wholly or partially replaced charcoal at some point during the use of the site. The activity at Bancombe Road overlaps with the dating for the expansion of general coal use from the 2nd century AD onward (Dearne and Branigan 1995, 76-77). Coal could have been distributed by sea, river or the road system (*ibid*., 80). In this case, the source of the coal may have been relatively local, although this was not an exposed source and would have had to be mined. The Somerset coalfield located to the north of the Mendip Hills and south-west of Bath was exploited from at least the 15th century AD (Bulley 1952). Earlier exploitation may be a preferred explanation over more expensive land transport of coal from surface deposits which were further afield (see Dearne and Branigan 1995). Bancombe Road, with its evidence of connectivity, would have had opportunity to obtain coal and other raw material via

road or indeed by river, using the River Cary.

Coal use has been noted elsewhere in Somerset. Use in a domestic hearth is indicated at Star Villa, Shipham, west of the Mendips (Barton 1964). Ilchester Mead villa, just off the Fosse Way, produced coal in association with slag, iron and flues (Hayward 1982, 19). The settlement at Catsgore, c. 4km to the south-east, on the road between the Fosse Way and the crossing of the Cary at Somerton, had evidence of ironworking. Leech (1982, 38) described ironworking as the 'most significant technological evidence' at Catsgore, identifying three smithing hearths and considerable quantities of industrial residues. In that case, a dump of smithing slag did not appear to be related to the building over which it had been apparently dumped, whilst hammerscale was scarce and there were a few specimens of coal and coal ash slag (Biek 1982, 125). The nearby villa at Low Ham, c. 4km to the west, also produced both coal and iron slag (Dewar 1955).

During the final use of Building 1603, Period 3v, several slab partitions were inserted. This construction feature has been noted in other Somerset buildings. At Bradley Hill, similar internal lias slab partitions were interpreted as lambing stalls. This was supported by association with an internal drain (Leech 1981, 189), which Bancombe Road does not have. Similar features also occurred in buildings at Catsgore, c. 4km to the south-east, where there were also drains, but in that case interpreted as either stall divisions or storage bins (Leech 1982, 52-53, fig. 40). In the absence of drains, an interpretation as storage bins should be considered for Bancombe Road, but it is unclear if this was associated with a continuation of industrial production or agricultural use.

The last major building phase (Period 3vi) saw a significant alteration, partitioning Building 1603 and either abandoning or demolishing its northern end to create a smaller structure, Building 1604. This building is difficult to interpret. The masonry is the best on the site, but there were few clearly associated features. It seems probable that the purpose of the building had changed, but what this was is not clear.

The sequence of buildings attracted deliberate depositional activity throughout their use, although it is not possible to always ascertain the chronology precisely. Both neonatal human remains and deposits of sheep/goat ABGs were made within the footprint of Building 1603. However, there were few clear cuts and material can only be assigned to periods in a fairly general way. There are indications that the practice continued throughout what were probably the main periods of use of Building 1603, although association with Buildings 1602 or 1604 cannot be entirely ruled out. However, most of the burials of both sheep/goat and human remains seem related to the structure of Building 1603, occurring predominantly against the walls or in corners (Fig. 10). In a couple of locations burial of animal and human neonatal remains are closely related. There seems to be some relationship or continuum between these practices.

Seventeen neonate burials occurred at Somerton Primary School. These were mainly earth cut, some marked with slabs and one possible cist grave were of neonates/infants (WA 2020, 4). Infant burials occurred in various phases of the buildings at Bradley Hill (Leech 1981, 183, 187). Leech noted that this occurred within the smallest rooms and inferred potential religious use (1981, 187). At least one occurred during the remodelling of the complex and, comprising an infant with a large jar with coins and a complete sheep's skull located in the building corner, was regarded as a possible foundation deposit (Leech 1981, 183). It is possible that some of the deposits within the buildings at Bancombe Road may have fulfilled a similar role.

At Catsgore, buildings of similar date and apparently similar practical function also contained infant burials (e.g. Leech 1982, 54). A total of 20 infants as well as a few older children and adolescents were buried in and around the buildings (Everton 1982a). At Bradley Hill, the burial of 21 infants was either contemporary with, or subsequent to, the use of the third building as a byre. Use of markers was implied due to the lack of intercutting. Unlike Bancombe Road, graves were deliberately constructed, with small stone cists (Leech 1981, 189). A shift in use from the 'practical' to the 'ritual' for the building use was suggested (Leech 1981, 192-93), as a part of the transformation of the site during the early 5th century (Gerrard 2005, 8). In the south-west corner of this building was a burnt area, possibly a hearth, around which there were no burials, but which was associated with some iron slag (Leech 1981, 192). The metalworking evidence at Ilchester Mead occurred in rooms which also contained infant remains (Hayward 1982, 14, fig. 12, 19).

The focus on sheep/goat at Bancombe Road is in keeping with many Roman rural sites and they were generally the most common species involved in associated bone groups during the Roman period in central England (Albarella 2019, 147). At Sigwells, Charlton Horethorne, one stone building contained a deposit which included largely whole and partial carcasses of at least five juvenile, sub-adult and adult sheep/goat, dating to 3rd century AD (South Cadbury Environs Project archive; personal observation). As at Bancombe Road, there was greater emphasis on the hind quarters. Slightly further afield, similar discrete deposits of partial carcasses or groups of probably

butchered sheep bone have come from later Roman period deposits at higher status sites, such as Druce Farm villa, Dorset (Randall 2022). At Catsgore, one sheep ABG was noted, inserted below the floor of one of the buildings which contained upright lias slab 'bins' (Leech 1982, 68) and being almost entire was interpreted as a foundation burial (Everton 1982b, 142). Interestingly, the same building also contained deposits which contained charcoal and 'much iron slag' (Leech 1982, 68).

The collocation of deposits of associated animal remains and neonatal burials within one space is of interest. Chadwick (2015) presents examples of the ritualised use of animal, including sheep, deposition, and association with human remains, suggesting that they confer ideas around death, fertility and renewal. In addition, activities such as metalworking 'may be infused with symbolic and metaphorical meaning' (Chadwick 2012, 298), and it seems that the combination of human neonatal burials and grouped animal remains within a structure given over to a transformative process may not be merely coincidental. This has been recognised for some time more widely in later prehistoric contexts (compare Hingley 1997) There are indications that this may have occurred at other local sites.

Activity at Bancombe Road appears to have come to an end at some point in the 4th century AD. There was no evidence that it lingered into the sub-Roman period, unlike Bradley Hill where the buildings stood into the 5th century and a cemetery was created which continued into the 5th-6th century (Leech 1981; Gerrard 2011). At Somerton Primary School one grave contained a near complete pot of the late 4th-early 5th century (WA 2020a, 5). Gerrard (2005, 6-7) has suggested that the rich and well settled Late Roman landscape around Bradley Hill, its proximity to a main arterial road and navigable rivers, made it likely for post-Roman occupation, whilst the Bradley Hill settlement avoided the specific economic changes at the end of the 4th century. The lack of evidence of later occupation at Bancombe Road may suggest contraction of settlement or the redundancy of this particular area subsequent to the collapse of a broader system which used the services of the smith. The chronology of the villas to the west of the site which the trackway may have served is unclear; if they were declining at this time, the traffic on this side road may have reduced leaving less of a market for the services of a metalworker. There may have been more profitable locations from which to work.

CONCLUSION

The excavation at Bancombe Road has provided further evidence for dispersed settlement on the ridge in the later Iron Age. It has also yielded evidence of a local routeway which may have defined the point of southern expansion of the settlement area to the north which developed through the Romano-British period and provided local connections to the Bancombe Hill villa and possibly other estates located to the west, and the road network to the east. Bradley Hill Lane may be the successor of the Romano-British trackway seen in these excavations. Most significantly, the excavation has provided convincing evidence of a sequence of buildings used for blacksmithing. Not only was this, understandably, located at the edge of settlement, to take advantage of passing trade on the local road network, and hinted at beliefs associated with metalworking, including the incorporation of potential ritualised deposition of human and animal remains, but it has yielded compelling evidence of the use of coal in Roman blacksmithing. This necessarily invites re-examination of material from other local potentially analogous sites, but perhaps also the possibility of the exploitation of the Somerset coalfield during the Roman period.

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